

Hafa Adai!

'Finance still awaiting House's action on resolution for retirees' bonuses' **PAGE 2**
Non-critical govt employees OK'd to take admin leave today. **PAGE 6**

\$1

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Premium pay for gov't workers

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres announced yesterday that the Department of Finance is set to release premium pay for CNMI government employees who have worked at least 40 hours to directly mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as CNMI government employees who have worked to provide public services since

the pandemic began.

CNMI government employees who have worked on the front lines of the pandemic

for at least 40 hours in directly mitigating COVID-19, such as providing prevention, re-
See PREMIUM on Page 4

Jan. 3: PSS to return to in-person classes

Khan assures safe return to in-person classes

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

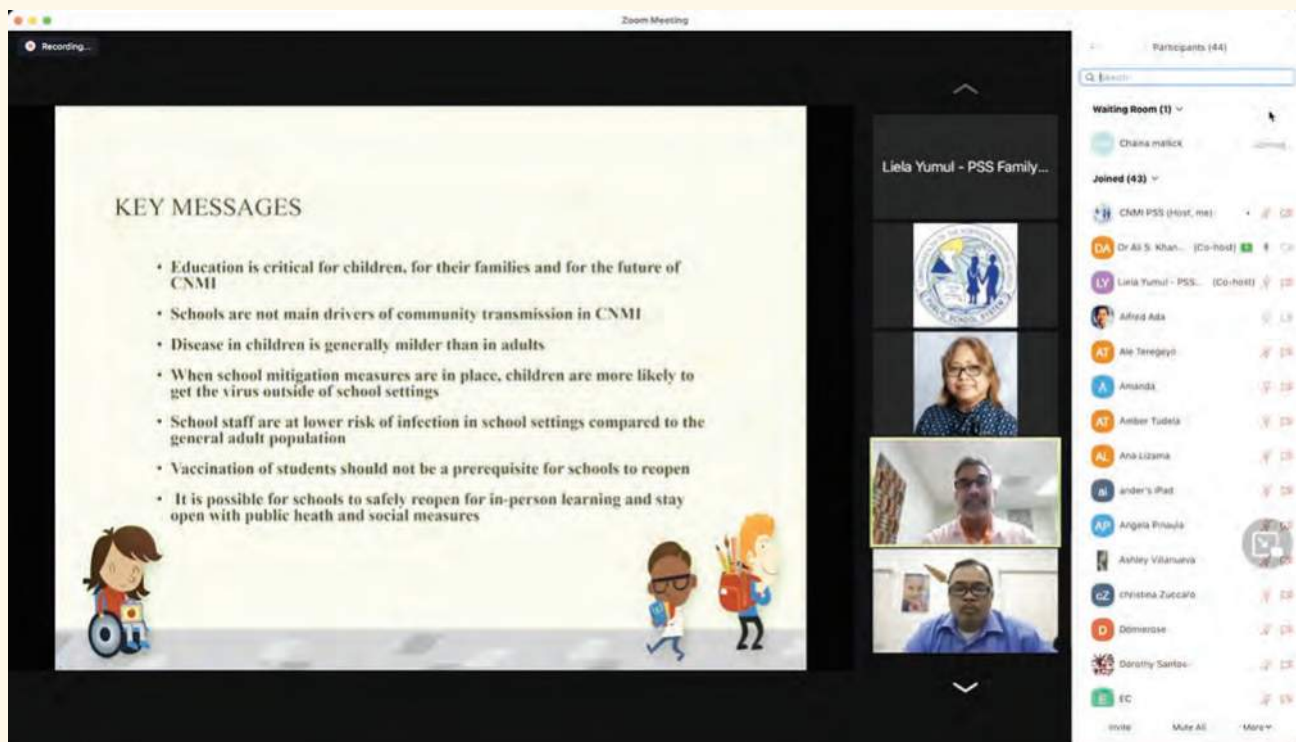
Multiple studies conducted

in 191 countries show that opening schools thus far has not been associated with community transmission of

COVID-19. In fact, COVID-19 superspreading events has not been seen in school-aged children from kinder-

garten to ninth grade, especially in schools with spread mitigation strategies in place.

See KHAN on Page 4



Medical epidemiologist Dr. Ali Khan, center right, presents to CNMI Public School System stakeholders his key messages regarding the safety and importance of reopening schools for in-person learning. The virtual meeting was held on Tuesday through Zoom. This screengrab is from a recording uploaded by PSS on its Facebook page. Also in photo is Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief executive officer Esther L. Muña and Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred B. Ada.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

All secondary schools of the CNMI Public School System with 70% of its eligible students vaccinated against COVID-19 will return to full in-person classes on Jan. 3, 2022.

This was learned during a

» BOE chair: Schools are safest place in entire CNMI

CNMI Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, with BOE chair Andrew L. Orsini and Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred B. Ada both assuring

See PSS on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:

- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

AT A GLANCE

As of 5:27pm, Dec. 29, 2021

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population **94.2%**
Fully Vaccinated: **34,632**

Days since last community transmission **3**

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	36,593
Fully Vaccinated:	34,632
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,277
Fully Vaccinated:	4,847
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,117

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	19,501	30	19,531
Recovered	18,956	3	18,959
Active	272	30	302
Deaths	270	0	270

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	2,963	0*	2,963
Traced via Travel Screening	308	0*	308
Traced via Community Screening	2,655	0*	2,655
Deaths	12	0*	12

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., <https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/>

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



42,987 First dose

Source: [vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/](https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/)

INSIDE



BUSINESS

A solid credit score can be the difference between qualifying for an apartment or missing out.

PAGE 11



NATION

California became the first state to record more than 5 million known coronavirus infections.

PAGE 12



ENVIRONMENT

U.S. officials have moved to open up public lands in Western states to solar power developments.

PAGE 14



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Local

'Finance still awaiting House's action on resolution for retirees' bonuses'

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Finance Secretary David DLG. Atalig said Tuesday night that they are still waiting for the House of Representatives to pass the Senate joint resolution in order for government retirees to get their \$500 bonuses.

In response to *Saipan Tri-*

bune's inquiry, Atalig stressed that they are not requesting for additional budget or to increase the fiscal year 2022 budget for the retirement bonuses.

"We are simply asking for a resolution to allow Gov. Ralph DLG Torres to reprogram within the Executive Branch \$1.3 million to pay the retirees' bonuses," he said.

Last Dec. 15, the Senate

unanimously adopted a joint resolution approving Torres' request to the Legislature to create a new program and business unit for the \$500 retiree bonuses. Senators approved Torres' request to reprogram \$1.3 million from the general fund for the payment of the retirees' bonuses.

Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian), au-

thor of the Senate Joint Resolution 22-05, said they agreed with the importance of expeditiously entertaining Torres' request in support of the retirees.

Last Dec. 20, House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) announced that he would like to keep SJR 22-05 on the agenda for further review.

Villagomez made the deci-

sion after Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan T. Attao (R-Saipan) raised some issues and underscored the need for more information from the Department of Finance and the administration.

Attao pointed out that any distribution of funds should begin in the House and any action that has to do with revenues that's moving from the Senate is deemed illegal under the CNMI Constitution.

In addition to that, he said, Torres' letter to Villagomez and Hofschneider had reflected that specific accounts be utilized, which is the discretionary account for the governor, lieutenant governor and other accounts within the Department of Finance shall be reprogrammed.

"Unfortunately, those documents were not provided to us," said Attao as he also discussed other reasons to get more information from Finance.

But Atalig said Tuesday that it seems that there needs to be clarification on why Torres requested for a joint resolution.

Atalig said that, according to Attorney General Edward Manibusan, there is no business unit or retirement bonus program in the current budget act, therefore they needed a joint legislative resolution. He said the governor does have reprogramming authority but, without a line item or funded

program, they need this joint resolution.

Atalig said funding has already been identified for this purpose.

He said that, as of Tuesday, they have never received anything from Attao.

Atalig pointed out that Senate legal counsel Antonette R. Villagomez's legal analysis on the matter is "spot on."

Last Dec. 20, Antonette Villagomez stated that the Senate has a constitutional authority to introduce and adopt SJR 22-05. Antonette Villagomez issued the opinion at the request of Hofschneider as questions have been raised whether the Senate had the constitutional authority to introduce the joint resolution and adopt it.

Villagomez concluded that pursuant to the Senate's constitutional authority under NMI Constitution Article 2 and its 22nd Official Rules of Procedure, the Senate properly introduced and adopted SJR 22-05 last Dec. 15 by a unanimous decision.

The legal counsel said the Senate's previous introduction and adoption of Senate Joint Resolution 19-04 and the House of Representatives' adoption of that same resolution is clear precedence that the Senate is constitutionally and statutorily authorized to introduce and adopt a Senate joint resolution pursuant to the Commonwealth Code.

Inos is elected Zoning board chairman

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Members of the CNMI Zoning board have elected Perry Inos Jr. as their new chairman during a meeting Tuesday in Dandan.

Inos served as treasurer during the term of Zoning board chair Tatiana Babauta, who resigned effective Sept. 5, 2021.

Inos said yesterday that it's a privilege to take on the role as chairman with the confidence and support of his fellow board members as they move into the new year. "I see great change and impact to come," he added.

He said their first initiative would be to introduce technology into all that they do in their processes in order to become more efficient.

Second, he said, they need to work closely with the newly appointed board members, administrator and staff to get valuable feedback concerning the Zoning law and needed amendments.

Third, Inos said, they have to work closely with the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation to implement these amendments.

Fourth, he said, they have to introduce a portal for community feedback in order to understand the community and business needs that make sense to the CNMI.

Lastly, he said, to better serve Saipan, implementing key performance indicators derived from stakeholder involvement will foster a stakeholder approach environment at the Zoning office.

At the meeting, the board members also elected Francisco Aguon as vice chairman, Kevin Guerrero as secretary, and Cecilia Taitano as treasurer.

Zoning administrator Gerylyn C. Dela Cruz said yesterday that it was the first meeting of the Zoning board with newly elected members Taitano, Edna Nisola, and Shayne Villanueva.



Inos

NAVFAC congratulates Engineers of the Year in Pacific

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM—Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command congratulates the 2022 civilian and military engineers of the year in the Pacific area of operations.

The 15 winners representing NAVFAC Pacific, Far East, Hawaii, Marianas, Northwest, Southwest, Officer in Charge of Construction Marine Corps Marianas, and OICC China Lake include: Layne Hazama, civilian engineer of the year from NAVFAC Pacific; John Braaten, civilian engineer of the year from NAVFAC Far East; Lt. Raymond Bendt, military engineer of the year from NAVFAC Far East; Toshihide Kak-

iuchi, host-nation engineer of the year from NAVFAC Far East; Wyatt Hue, civilian engineer of the year from NAVFAC Hawaii; Lt. Cmdr. John Daly, military engineer of the year from NAVFAC Hawaii; Amor Alves, civilian engineer of the year from NAVFAC Marianas; Trevor Luncford, civilian engineer of the year from NAVFAC Northwest; Lt. Craig Mauss, military engineer of the year from NAVFAC Northwest; Jacqueline Oravitz, civilian engineer of the year from NAVFAC Southwest; Lt. Cmdr. Carl Chase, military engineer of the year from NAVFAC Southwest; Suzanne Duffy, designer of the

year from NAVFAC Southwest; Peter Ridilla, civilian engineer from OICC MCM; Lt. Cmdr. Joshua Lewis, military engineer from OICC MCM; and Cmdr. Kyle Krass from OICC CL.

"Please join me in congratulating the NAVFAC Pacific area of operations awardees for their continued contributions to the NAVFAC engineering community," said NAVFAC Pacific commander Rear Adm. Dean VanderLey. "Each year we receive an impressive selection of nominees and this year was no exception. I would like to extend my personal job well done to each awardee for this impressive recognition."

These employees were selected based on education, professional registration, continuing education, professional and technical society activities, National Society of Professional Engineers involvement, awards and honors, civic and humanitarian activities and engineering achievements.

"Our NAVFAC military and civilian engineers of the year were instrumental in advancing engineering innovation and improving our Department of Defense facilities capabilities in the Pacific," said NAVFAC Pacific Design and Construction Business Line manager and chief engineer Marc Wong. (USN)

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Impeachment committee's 1st meeting is next week

» **Committee will entertain public comments**

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House Special Investigating Committee on Impeachment will hold its first meeting this Tuesday, Jan. 4, in the House of Representatives chamber.

Vice speaker Blas Jonathan T. Attao (R-Saipan),



Attao

who chairs the committee, informed House members about the meeting that will start at 1:30pm. Included in the agenda are committee rules of procedures and the House Resolution 22-14 that impeached Gov. Ralph DLG Torres.

The committee will also entertain public comments at the meeting.

It was House Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee chair Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) who introduced House Resolution 22-14 impeaching Torres for alleged commission of felonies, corruption, and neglect of duty in violation of Article 3, Section 19 of the CNMI Constitution.

Last Dec. 21, House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) appointed Attao as chairman of the Special Investigating Committee on Impeachment that will evaluate whether to actually impeach Torres.

Attao is supporting Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios' intent to run as governor for the November 2022 gubernatorial election. Torres, who is the titular head of the NMI Republican Party, is seeking re-election as governor, with Sen. Vinnie Vinson F. Sablan as his running-mate.

Villagomez also appointed to the committee eight members—Republican Reps. Angel A. Demapan, Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero, and Patrick H. San Nicolas, and Democrat Reps. Christina E. Sablan, Corina L. Magofna, and Leila C. Staffler, and independents Joseph A. Flores and Donald M. Manglona.

Villagomez said this Spe-

cial Investigating Committee on Impeachment shall be an investigatory committee that is authorized by the House to

issue subpoenas.

It will require a two-thirds vote of the House, equal to 14 representatives, to im-

peach Torres. If that happens, the impeachment then goes to the CNMI Senate, which will then hold a trial,

with House lawmakers acting as prosecutors. Again, it will require a two-thirds vote in the Senate, equivalent to

six votes, to convict the governor. When that happens, that's when Torres will have to step down.

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STK: 18HS951
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KBB: \$18,632

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STK: 19P384
19,205 MILES
KBB: \$50,433

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FORTE LX



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• 73,102 MILES
• STK: 16P363
• KBB: \$14,632

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• STK: 21D019C
• KBB: \$19,253

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KONA SPORT



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• 48,475 MILES
• STK: 21H074A
• KBB: \$22,582

2019 MAZDA
MAZDA6 GT



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\$28,995

• 27,105 MILES
• STK: 22M021A
• KBB: \$29,936

2016 MAZDA
MAZDA6 SPORT



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• STK: 16R269
• KBB: \$14,450

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• KBB: \$22,453

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• 85,000 MILES
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2018 KIA
FORTE HATCHBACK



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• 13,501 MILES
• STK: 18HS950
• KBB: \$14,995

2020 HYUNDAI
VENUE



SALE PRICE

\$18,995

• 8,383 MILES
• STK: 21D082A
• KBB: \$21,071

2019 HYUNDAI
ELANTRA
TURBO



SALE PRICE

\$21,995

• 30,501 MILES
• STK: 19P371
• KBB: \$23,606

2019 HONDA
RIDGELINE
RTL-E-AWD



SALE PRICE

\$43,995

• 34,455 MILES
• STK: 19P367
• KBB: \$47,459

2018 KIA
FORTE LX



SALE PRICE

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• 15,501 MILES
• STK: 18HS922
• KBB: \$18,632

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• KBB: \$19,752

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Today is GCC spring 2022 registration deadline

MANGILAO, Guam—The last day to register for the upcoming spring 2022 semester at the Guam Community College is today, Dec.

30, 2021. Those not able to meet the deadline will still be able to apply/register up until the first day classes on Jan. 5, 2022. However, it highly

recommended that students register and apply payment sooner than later to secure their seat in class(es).

Registration may be done in per-

son at the Mangilao campus or on the GCC website at www.guamcc.edu/apply. Information on the GCC admissions process, the academic calendar, tuition rates and fees can also be found on the college website. Last day to register is Thursday, Dec. 30, 2021, with the first day of class Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022. Student orientation will be on Jan. 3, 2022, at 9am in the Multi-Purpose Auditorium, building #400. Orientation is required for all new GCC students.

Financial aid can help students meet their goal of completing a program at GCC. Students are urged to fill out a free application for federal student aid, or FAFSA, form to determine their eligibility to receive federal financial aid, scholarships or grant funding. Again, the FAFSA applica-

tion form and process are free of charge. For more information or assistance with financial aid applications/scholarships available please call 671-735-5543/5544 or email financialaid@guamcc.edu.

Additionally, those whose financial situation has changed from what is reflected in their most recent income tax return are encouraged to adjust their FAFSA application. Some applicants may now be eligible for financial aid based on those changes. This applies to those who lost a job or otherwise experienced a drop in income.

For more information on FAFSA financial aid and scholarships visit our website at www.GuamCC.edu/FinancialAid. To enroll or register in the spring 2022 semester call 671-735-5531 or email gcc.registrar@guamcc.edu. **(PR)**



PANORAMIC VIEW

A jogger marvels at the thick clouds that almost fully cover the blue sky above the Eloy S. Inos Peace Park, which was formerly a solid waste disposal site known as the Puerto Rico Dump. Rising 95 feet above sea level, the park is a favorite place for joggers as it offers panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean and the mountain on Saipan.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PSS

From Page 1

ing that PSS has the safety measures and protocols in place to ensure a safe return to full in-person classes.

Early into the meeting, Orsini addressed the concerns some parents are having with sending their children back to school for full in-person classes. Orsini reiterated that community spread of COVID-19 did not originate in PSS schools and assured that PSS has safety protocols to maintain the safety of all students, whether or not they are vaccinated.

“As chairman of this board, I want to reiterate to all the parents out there that, as far as having your child come to school—whether vaccinated or not—schools are the safest place right now in the entire Commonwealth,” said Orsini. “I can assure you that the virus itself in any way [was] not borne in the schools;

it’s coming from outside [into the schools]. Rest assured to everybody that the schools are complying with the protocols in place.”

Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan, who is senior director of Student and Support Services for PSS, said that there will be several “layers of protection” in place to keep students safe come Jan. 3.

On top of observing the “3 W’s” (wash your hands, wear a face mask, watch your distance), PSS will also be promoting opportunities to get vaccinated through school-based vaccinations and conducting quarterly COVID-19 antigen testing.

Additional measures include classroom modifications such as placing barriers, placing visual signs that indicate proper distances for social distancing, improving ventilation and installing UV filters on air conditioning units. Pangelinan added that schools will be restricting access to certain campus areas to minimize

interactions between on-campus students and staff and campus visitors.

Later into the meeting, Ada said he recently requested all PSS school principals to procure weekly cleanings for their campuses two to three times a week. Ada assured that PSS has ample funding to support sanitation requests.

Ada said he empathizes with PSS’ stakeholders who have been longing for a return to full in-person classes. For those who remain hesitant about going to class on Jan. 3, Ada said he and PSS aim to work with them to alleviate their concerns.

“I too really want to open schools [for full] face-to-face. Whatever you’re feeling, I feel it, the teachers feel it, the students feel it, the whole community feels it. We do have a small portion of students and parents that don’t want to [go to school come Jan. 3] because of fear of the pandemic, and we understand, and we’re going to work with [them],” he said.

CNMI government employees, who have provided and maintained critical services for our public despite the challenges of these past two years. Happy New Year, and let us all continue to work together to fight this pandemic.”

According to Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig, “When we worked on the ARPA Spending Plan, Gov. Torres was adamant that we compensate our hardworking frontliners with this premium pay allocation. Thank you to those that are dedicated to protecting our borders and doing their best to keep our islands safe. This is a great way to end the year, and I hope all have a great New Year!” **(PR)**

KHAN

From Page 1

Medical epidemiologist Dr. Ali Khan cited these key points Tuesday during a collaborative meeting between the CNMI Public School System and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. to highlight the safety and importance of reopening schools for in-person learning.

Citing a review brief compiled by UNICEF and UNESCO on several studies, Khan said that schools are not main drivers of community transmission in CNMI. He said it is possible for schools to safely reopen for in-person learning and stay open with public health and social measures.

“For parents who may be concerned that sending kids back to school may lead to increased transmission within the community, we do know that does not happen,” said Khan.

The event was held online and was attended by CHCC and PSS leadership and PSS’ stakeholders. A download link to the brief compiled by UNICEF and UNESCO can be found at <https://www.unicef.org/documents/in-person-schooling-covid-19-transmission-review-of-evidence>.

Other key takeaways from Khan’s presentation on Tuesday are that when school mitigation measures are in place, children are more likely to get the virus outside of school settings; school staff are at lower risk of infection in school settings compared to the general adult population; and vaccination of students should not be a prerequisite for schools to reopen.

Khan said that, along with being a medical epidemiologist, he is also a pediatrician. As a pediatrician, he said he will never say that children are zero to no risk to a disease; children can still get infected. However, in terms of COVID-19, children are less likely to be infected and the symptoms experienced by infected children will likely be much milder than what infected adults may experience.

By global COVID-19 infection percentages, Khan said children under 14 years old make up 8%. By

global COVID-19 death percentages, children within this age group make 0.2% to 0.4%.

Khan also said that when mitigation measures are in place, such as making sure face coverings are worn, maintaining social distancing, and washing/sanitizing hands, children are less likely to get infected in school.

Khan said that reopening schools with “a layered set of protection measures” has been advocated by health leaders even before COVID-19 vaccines were publicly available. As such, he said that COVID-19 vaccinations should not be thought of as a prerequisite to reopening schools for in-person classes, but rather an additional layer of protection on top of mitigation measures that are and have already been in place.

“Having a certain number of kids vaccinated is not a reason to keep schools closed, I see [a high vaccination rate] as a bonus. It means we already knew we had all these measures to protect our kids and teachers, and now we have one more measure on top of those that will protect them even more,” said Khan.

He said it takes a community effort to keep schools open and further minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Khan said it is crucial for schools to enforce and observe mitigation measures and test children and staff for COVID-19. For parents and guardians living in the same households as students, Khan urged getting vaccinated.

“To make this happen requires a whole-community approach, and kudos to the community and [CHCC] for their work that they are doing. ... It will require work within schools to make sure that you’re thinking about hygiene, cleaning schools, cohorting schools, social distancing, masking, all measures that are necessary. ... Especially for parents, grandparents, teachers and others, get vaccinated. Protect yourself, protect your kids, protect your community,” said Khan.

“There’s lots of layers of protection for kids to go back to school, and to do it very safely,” he added.

A question-and-answer session with Khan immediately followed his presentation.

PREMIUM

From Page 1

sponse, preparedness, and recovery services, will be receiving \$5,000 in premium pay.

CNMI government employees who have worked to provide essential public services to the Commonwealth during this pandemic will be receiving \$1,000 in premium pay.

Torres said this expresses his appreciation for CNMI government frontliners, first responders, and employees.

“The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon unprecedented challenges for our Common-

wealth, and has required a proactive response to safeguard our community. We owe great thanks to our CNMI government frontliners, first responders, and employees. Their hard work and sacrifices made to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our community during such challenging times is something to be grateful for,” said Torres. “They deserve more, and I wish that we were able to give them more, but I hope that this token of appreciation and gratitude will help end this year on a positive note. As we go into this new year and continue to navigate [the] ‘new normal’ of this pandemic in our Commonwealth, let us recognize and thank our hardworking



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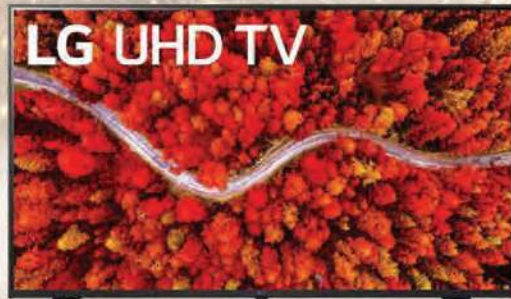
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Non-critical govt employees OK'd to take admin leave today

In the spirit of the holidays, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres is authorizing all non-critical employees of the Commonwealth government to take an administrative leave today, Dec. 30, 2021.

In a directive yesterday that authorized the administrative leave, Torres said, "I take this opportunity to thank you all for your hard work and the many sacrifices you have made in service of our Commonwealth and the safety of our people."

In his message, Torres said: "As we are all well aware, this past year has been filled

with many unique setbacks and challenges, not just for our Commonwealth but for the entire nation and the world. Yet despite the hardships and inconveniences that we have endured, we are reminded that it is not the setbacks and challenges we face that define us as a people and community, but rather, our ability to adapt and overcome them. "Our Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., the COVID-19 Task Force, and our government employees have championed our efforts to prevent, respond to, and

contain the spread of COVID-19 in the Marianas. Likewise, our community has diligently done their part to keep their loved ones and neighbors as safe as possible by getting vaccinated and abiding by the public health mandates and guidelines issued to control the outbreak in the islands.

"I am proud of the work of our first responders and front-liners and in the resiliency of our community members during these unparalleled times. Moreover, I am hopeful for all that the new year may bring, for the past

year has shown us that there is little we cannot accomplish when we all work together.

"I take this opportunity to thank you all for your hard work and the many sacrifices you have made in service of our Commonwealth and the safety of our people. I ask that we all continue to protect and look out for one another during the rest of the holiday season and in the year to come.

"...On behalf of my family, staff, and entire administration, I wish you all a safe and prosperous New Year." *(Saipan Tribune)*

Saipan son is summa cum laude at BSU, continues to excel

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Manuel "Manny" DLG Sablan, the son of John T. Sablan and Gloria DLG Sablan, recently graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in accounting from Boise State University. Before BSU, he graduated as valedictorian of Saipan Southern High School's class of 2018.

In January next year, Sablan will begin his studies to receive a master's degree through BSU, and aspires to become a certified public accountant in the future.

In a phone interview with Gloria Sablan on Tuesday, she said that Manuel Sablan received his degree on Dec. 18 this year, and opted to complete his undergraduate studies online and at home on Saipan due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She emphasized that Manuel Sablan completed his undergraduate degree in three and a half years and that, out of 2,407 graduates, there were only 67 who graduated with summa cum laude honors, with Manuel Sablan being

one of them.

Manuel Sablan currently helps JG Sablan Ice & Water with accounting work, said Gloria Sablan.

Gloria Sablan briefly mentioned that she has four sons, the eldest John Jr., Lorenzo, Manuel, and youngest Walter. She said Manuel Sablan serves as a mentor to Walter, who is currently in his second year at BSU.

A proud mother, Gloria Sablan said throughout his high school and college years she regularly checked in on Manuel Sablan's grades and achievements.

When asked if it was time to celebrate, Gloria Sablan said that Manny always replied, "Can do, Mom."

"Manny is a very simple [and] humble kid, and every time I ask how's he doing, how's school, and how's his grades I ask, 'Will I be jumping up and down in my heels?' [and] he'd say, 'Can do, Mom'. ...Just three words would explain how we would [excel in] his classes, and sure enough he made it to summa cum laude," said Gloria Sablan.



Sablan

MCDONALD'S EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

McDonald's announced its Employees of the Year at the 2021 McDonald's of Saipan Annual Employee Appreciation Party on Dec. 20, 2021, at the Ayuyu residence. The party, which had a Wild West theme, recognized these employees for outstanding job performance, teamwork and their dedication. From left, McDonald's vice president Joe E. Ayuyu Jr., owner/operator Marcia E. Ayuyu, Garapan store general manager Ruthzel Perez, Garapan store's EOY 2021 Lloyd Vincent Javier, Middle Road store EOY 2021 Allan Yacan, Middle Road store general manager Joyce Asistores, and chief executive officer/president Jose C. Ayuyu.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



How to gather safely during the holidays



CLEAN AND DISINFECT

Clean high touch surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

If someone is sick or has tested positive for COVID-19, disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

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How to: Expedited EADs for healthcare workers

Effective immediately, if you are a healthcare worker who has a pending Employment Authorization Document renewal application (Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization) and your EAD expires in 30 days

or less or has already expired, you can ask the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for expedited processing of your EAD application.

To determine whether you are a qualifying healthcare worker, see the DHS advisory

memorandum ("Healthcare / Public Health" section, pages 7-9). You should be prepared to provide evidence of your profession or current employment as a healthcare worker. If the evidence you provide is not sufficient, we may not accom-

modate your request for expedited processing of your Form

I-765. Expedited processing means only that USCIS will

process the application faster.

To request expedited processing, call the USCIS Contact Center at 800-375-5283 (TTY 800-767-1833). **(PR)**



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Free webinar teaches GovGuam procurement

The Guam Procurement Technical Assistance Center is offering a free live webinar on the Guam government procurement process today, Dec. 30, 2021, from 10am to 11:30am via Zoom. The Guam PTAC will explain government of Guam procurement, where to find opportunities, and how to submit bids. Links to the live webinar and the webinar evaluation will be emailed to all registered attendees 15 minutes before the start of the webinar. To register visit: www.guamptac.com. **(PR)**

Water service interruption in Fina Sisu on Jan. 5, 2022

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be a scheduled water service interruption on Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022, from 8am to 5pm for customers in the Fina Sisu village along Tun Antonio Apa Road and Tun Joaquin Doi Road. The scheduled water service interruption is to allow CUC's contractor for the Fina Sisu Waterline Replacement Project to perform the tapping and connection of the new 8-inch waterline at Tun Antonio Apa Road. Customers may experience low water pressure to no water. Water service to the affected areas will resume soon after the

connection. This project is part of the Fina Sisu Waterline Replacement Project to provide a more reliable water system to the people of the CNMI. It is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. **(PR)**

High surf advisory in effect until 6am today

A high surf advisory remains in effect until 6am today, Thursday, on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, large breaking waves up to 10 feet are present in north and west facing reefs through 6 am today. This creates dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water. Inexperienced swimmers should remain out of the water due to dangerous surf conditions. The public is advised to stay out of the water along north and east facing shores. Elsewhere, swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. **(PR)**

Indo-Pacific Command hosts mid-JCM in Palau

ASAN, Guam—U.S. Indo-Pacific Command senior military leaders hosted the mid-Joint Committee Meeting in the Republic of Palau on Dec. 14-15, which featured the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Palau John Hennessy-Niland, Republic of Palau Vice President Jerrlyn Uduch Sengbau Sr., U.S. Department of State leadership, and federal agency representatives.

Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, Joint Region Marianas commander and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's senior military official for Palau, delivered opening remarks for the mid-JCM and highlighted the critical importance of JCMs as a component of the Compact of Free Association between the Republic of Palau and the U.S. Additionally, Nicholson reiterated the importance of the semi-annual meetings that facilitate open and honest dialogue on topics of mutual interest to Palau and the Department of Defense.

"The JCM process allows us to have discussions about defense agreements, to forge new partnerships, to expand

relationships and friendships bound by trust—reaffirming our commitment to each other's safety and well-being," said Nicholson.

"We are fortunate to have shared values and a close bond of friendship with our likeminded partners in the region as we work together on issues and concerns toward our most fundamental and common needs: defense and security of Palau and the region," said Nicholson. "This collaboration is critical to achieving our shared goal of economic prosperity, to preserving our common values, and to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific."

In addition to the JCM, Nicholson met with Hennessy-Niland, received briefings from several state and local officials, and toured significant areas germane to military operations, including the Civic Action Team's Camp Katuu located in Airai. Camp Katuu is overseen by the Navy's 30th Naval Construction Regiment based in Guam, with rotational operational responsibility now assigned to the U.S. Air Force.

"Our men and women in

uniform of the Civic Action Team have been performing amazing work in Palau for decades, and I am extremely proud of their achievements as they work alongside the people and government of Palau," said Nicholson. "I am honored to have been able to visit with them during this trip and to recognize their dedication and sacrifices."

Nicholson further expressed his gratitude on behalf of the United States to the nation of Palau for hosting U.S. military training exercises, as he said these opportunities have strengthened the military's mission capabilities and interoperability with allies and partners.

"I'd like to extend my gratitude for the outstanding and enduring partnership between our two nations. Without the support of Palau's government and local community, we would not be able to fulfill our promise to protect and safeguard this country, a commitment that began when the U.S. came ashore on Peleliu during World War II," added Nicholson. **(PR)**

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

COVID-19 isn't like chickenpox. How to get school vaccination mandates right

Almost all children 5 or older (as well as those reluctant adults) should receive their COVID-19 vaccinations, especially now that we're learning some frightening information about how quickly and easily the omicron variant spreads. But a judge's tentative ruling last week scrapping the vaccine mandate imposed by San Diego schools shows that getting there via school district policies is far more complicated than it seems.

In his ruling against San Diego County, Superior Court Judge John S. Meyer made it clear he isn't happy about parents who resist vaccinating their kids. He called the district's vaccine mandate "necessary and rational" and made no finding that parents have an inherent individual right to defy rules that protect public health. Rather, his decision was based on legal issues of local versus state authority.

State law lists which vaccinations are required to attend school, with no personal exemption, but that law was drawn up years before there was such a thing as COVID-19. Only students with a legitimate medical issue can attend school—private or public—unvaccinated for measles, mumps, diphtheria and seven other diseases, almost all of them contagious.

Parents' resistance to COVID-19 vaccination flies in the face of science, but at the same time, inoculating people against this virus isn't the same as administering the measles vaccine or other standard childhood immunizations.

The most bulletproof way to go would be new legislation adding the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of required childhood immunizations, but that's not necessarily the most effective way to go about it. COVID-19 isn't like chickenpox, for which inoculation plus a booster is enough for all of childhood. We don't know how the coronavirus will change, or if a vaccine shot will be needed every year.

The protection offered by the current COVID-19 vaccines appears to fade within several months, and the virus mutates readily. So far, studies indicate that existing vaccines fend off the worst effects of the two major variants, delta and omicron. But omicron might be so contagious that even if the rate of serious cases is low, the effect on hospitals and on public health could be dire because of the sheer number of infected people.

Given the spread of omicron, mandating the initial doses of existing vaccines, while helpful, might not be enough. In October, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced a vaccine mandate for students in grades 7 through 12 that would take effect starting in the school term after full FDA approval of a vaccine for children ages 12 and older. This means that unless the FDA gives final approval for use of the vaccine in 12- to 15-year-

See CHICKENPOX on Next Page



America would be more happy with more people

It is one of the most worrisome economic statistics of a year that was full of them: In 2021, according to the Census Bureau, the U.S. population grew at the slowest rate in recorded history.

This poor performance was due to slowing immigration, low birth rates, and of course a high number of deaths from COVID. Total population grew by just 0.1%, or 392,665. Even measured in absolute terms, that increase is smaller than during the confluence of World War I and the Spanish flu pandemic.

Inflation and unemployment rates get a lot of attention, justifiably. But this macroeconomic news ought to be of at least equal concern. That's because—in economies as well as careers—what's important is not only the level of achievement but also the momentum. The goal is to have a series of ascending successes pushing you toward successively stronger positions.

For all its flaws, the United States is a marvelous collection of invented and evolved institutions. It took a lot of work to get here. At the margin, it costs relatively little to allow more people to enjoy and benefit from America's Constitution, its favorable business environment and its nuclear umbrella. In the terminology of economics, the U.S. is a public good. Allowing more people in the country is like allowing more people to fill the empty seats in a theater for an excellent performance: Why not?

One simple implication is that the more patriotic you are, the more you ought to believe in a large and growing population. Most of America's founders certainly had that expectation. Alternately, you might think there is nothing special about American institutions, as many a cynic has argued, and be indifferent about the size of its population. But to arrive at that conclusion, you have to deny there is significant value in the basic American framework.

A growing population also brings practical advantages. Consider the year's debate over the effect of stimulus on inflation. It doesn't seem, with a 6.8% inflation rate, that America quite got the balance right. With a significantly growing population, macroeconomic policy is much easier. The growing demands of an increasing number of workers and consumers is itself a form of economic stimulus. But these demands are not in general inflationary, because they are offset by more work and higher output. Those boosts in supply will tend to offset inflationary pressures, and they also will maintain economic growth. A significantly growing population is a kind of mac-

By TYLER COWEN

Bloomberg Opinion

Tyler Cowen is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He is a professor of economics at George Mason University and writes for the blog Marginal Revolution. His books include Big Business: A Love Letter to an American Anti-Hero.



roeconomic free lunch.

More anecdotally, have you ever visited a city and felt a sense of stagnation and decline? For me, that feeling is more common in a city that is losing residents rather than gaining them. There seem to be fewer and less diverse restaurants, theaters, even street musicians.

In contrast, the most exciting states, cities and neighborhoods have lots of new venues and new people. Over the last decade the three fastest growing states, in percentage terms, are Utah, Idaho and Texas. I've recently visited the latter two and felt a palpable sense of excitement and ambition.

The relationship between population and dynamism holds at the national level as well, though it is harder to see because declines are not always so concentrated in a single geographic locale. But a country's mood cannot help but be affected by how many people it has and their ability to make unique contributions to society.

America's population is not declining right now, but it is not doing much better than holding steady. That brings its own mood of stasis and complacency. And let me be so bold as to suggest that, more than most countries, America is highly dependent on its own sense of optimism and growth. Otherwise, how is it to remain a top innovator? How will it pay off all its debts?

The most common argument against a growing population is that it harms the environment. But any potential solutions to environmental problems involve innovation, and more people means more potential innovators. It is the growing, dynamic societies that are most likely to improve green energy.

Yes, America is in a funk, and low population growth is both a cause and symptom. But this crisis need not be permanent—and one way to solve it is simply to make and bring in more happy people.

New Year's Day message

As 2021 draws to an end, let us continue to pray and keep in our hearts those who have left us, those who have lost so much, and those who are still fighting the virus. It has been a tough year for many of us, from the daily reminders of the pandemic public health emergency guidelines, social distancing, limited or closures and cancellations of many activities and gatherings, to reformatting our daily schedules and routines. But as a community that cares and looks out for one another, we remain committed to ride out these real challenges.

I truly hope that this COVID-19 pandemic will end soon and bring our lives back to normal. My prayer for all is that 2022 will bring many opportunities for our citizens and businesses to grow and prosper. Let us continue to work hard to keep the momentum of our concerted efforts as we look forward to an exciting new year. I would like to thank our veterans, active service members, first responders, frontline essential workers, school administrators, teachers, and everyone in the public and private sectors for all their hard work and dedicated service to our citizens.

By **DAVID M. APATANG**

Special to the Saipan Tribune

David M. Apatang is mayor of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.



I wish everyone a very safe and joyful holiday as we welcome 2022.

The year in review: Confessions of an incurable optimist

Twelve months ago, Americans could indulge in optimism. For a bright, shining moment, 2021 promised to be a year of recovery.

The first vaccines for COVID-19 were going into health workers' arms. The economy was climbing out of recession. And after a bruising campaign, a new president promised a return to calm.

I shared the high hopes.

"Joe Biden ... is 78 years old, and he has been a politician for more than 50 years. Those qualifications may be his hidden superpowers," I wrote. "Improbable as it sounds, this politician of modest talents and limited eloquence may have exactly the gifts he needs to succeed."

What could go wrong? Plenty.

The pandemic didn't end. The economy boomed, but inflation surged. And while Biden restored a dose of normality to politics, voters didn't feel it. By the end of the year, his approval rating dropped to 43%, the worst first-year report card for any recent president except, of course, Donald Trump.

We in the media are often accused of focusing on bad news. In 2021, I erred in the other direction: I was too optimistic.

This year-end column is my annual exercise in humility—a look back at what I got wrong.

Let's start with the most disruptive problem of the year, the pandemic.

A year ago, vaccines looked like a good bet to bring COVID-19 under control.

Too many people were hesitating to get the shot—but no worries, I wrote: Governors were rolling out inducements including free beer and prizes to persuade them. "It turns out that what really motivates people is the chance to strike it rich," I wrote.

Wrong. I didn't expect that roughly 15% of adults, mostly white Republicans, would persist in refusing vaccination. Their resistance makes it harder for all of us to reach herd immunity—the point at which the virus stops spreading.

That's one of several reasons Biden's first year has been a dis-

appointment: The pandemic is a long way from over.

A second reason is the economy's fitful recovery. Corporate profits are up, unemployment is down, but prices are rising—and that affects everyone, not just those who land new jobs.

I underestimated the impact inflation would have on Biden's standing and ability to move legislation through Congress. Optimist that I am, I looked for signs of progress.

In July, I wrote that the president had "something to celebrate": Even Joe Manchin III, the conservative Democratic senator from West Virginia, sounded ready to vote for a big social spending bill.

Last week, Manchin said he's not a yes.

Meanwhile, the bipartisanship Biden promised has remained elusive. In November, Congress passed a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill, but that was a rare exception in a bitterly polarized year.

Even then, Trump denounced the 19 GOP senators and 13 House members who supported the bill and threatened to run them out of office.

A year ago, I wrote that my New Year's resolution was to ignore the former president's eruptions. That proved not only impossible but also unwise. Trump is still the dominant figure in his party and the odds-on favorite for its 2024 presidential nomination.

In January, I dismissed the notion that Republicans in Congress might try to overturn the results of an election as mere bluster, a "Potemkin coup." It was a clever phrase, but wrong: Trump's attempt to incite a constitutional crisis was—and remains—deadly serious. I underrated his malevolent staying power.

Farther afield, amid terrifying news about extreme weather, I even found reasons for optimism on climate change.

"As improbable as it seems, there are glimmers of hope on the horizon," I wrote as world leaders gathered for a summit. "Denialism, the dismissal of climate change as bogus, is dying. ... [Voters] want their politicians to act."

Except they didn't.

I didn't get everything wrong. I listed foreign crises that would

By **DOYLE MCMANUS**

Los Angeles Times

Doyle McManus is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times. Readers may send him email at doyle.mcmanus@latimes.com.



challenge Biden: China's assertive behavior in Asia, Russia's threats against Ukraine, the fall of the U.S.-backed government in Afghanistan.

In July, more than a month before the Taliban took Kabul, I reported that the Afghan armed forces were disintegrating and that the government could collapse.

"Biden will rightly be judged by the outcome," I wrote.

If a columnist could see that coming, why did it surprise the White House?

Still, the balance sheet for 2021 isn't all bad.

We face a dangerous new wave of COVID-19, but we're better prepared—and better vaccinated—than a year ago. We grumble about the supply chain, but Christmas wasn't canceled. We still have a democracy despite Trump's efforts to undermine it.

So I look to 2022 with—what else?—renewed optimism.

"Presidents often run into trouble during their first year in office, and some manage to recover," I noted in November. "Ronald Reagan took the nation into a deep recession in 1981 ... but once the economy recovered, he was reelected by a landslide. Bill Clinton presided over a disastrous first year and lost control of Congress in 1994, only to win reelection in 1996."

A few lucky breaks in the pandemic, more economic growth and a slowdown in inflation could make 2022 look much better. When any of that good news arrives, you can count on me to let you know.

It's OK to get angry over omicron; it's absolutely exhausting

As I walk through the entrance of our busy emergency department, I see the familiar sight of the anxious and frustrated faces of patients in the packed waiting room. We exchange quick glances at each other, and so much emotion is conveyed merely through the eyes above our masks. I sit down at my computer, get a sign-out from the outgoing colleague, and do a quick, silent prayer—please give me strength, patience, compassion, and humility as I speak to and care for my patients. I know that being here is among the worst and most anxiety-provoking times for many of my patients. For some others, it is a routine visit that we treat with a shabby, cold turkey sandwich and a couple hours of observation, because there is simply nowhere else for them to go or anyone else to

speak to about their loneliness.

Lately, though, it's been getting harder to ignore the voice inside of me that says, "I'm exhausted. I feel burned out."

Last week, several of my colleagues tested positive for COVID. They were "triple vaccinated," with two injections of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, as well as a booster shot that is now officially recommended by the CDC. Many U.S. states are also recording the highest single day count of new COVID-19 cases since the onset of the pandemic, while holiday parties and plane tickets are also being canceled left and right. This, just as it began to feel as if things were beginning to go back to normalcy.

As for me, I had plans to visit my family for the holiday and lunch dates with my friends, but now with the new surge of cases, I will be joining others in responding to the call of duty at work for our colleagues who've fallen ill despite having done everything they were supposed to. Truly, the past two years of uncertainty and anxiety, with intermittent periods of hope, have been exhausting for all of us, including us health care workers.

There have been numerous peer reviewed studies that show the pandemic's more subtle and insidious effects on our mental health. But I also palpate so much of this angst personally as I speak to my patients, who come to the ER for a multitude of reasons. As I listen to their stories in the cold emergency department room, it becomes so evident to me that we are all very, very tired and anxious. Of course, how could we not be? Another surge? Another round of cancellations? Not again! Will it ever end?

Although we still do not know much about the nature of the omicron variant (and likely other future variants), research done by some of the brightest minds of humanity has shown us that vaccination and getting boosters can reduce the risk of ourselves

By **OWEN LEE-PARK**

The Baltimore Sun

Owen Lee-Park is an emergency medicine resident doctor at George Washington Hospital in Washington, D.C.



and our loved ones getting serious illnesses from COVID (i.e. death) by over tenfold. And the scientific and medical community is already developing treatments that could prevent serious cases of COVID-19, with some already showing promising results. If science can bring forth effective vaccination and treatment, it is possible that in the near future, we may finally achieve the elusive state of herd immunity, much like we do for annual influenza cases.

But as we patiently wait for the scientific breakthroughs, I believe it is so important for us to give ourselves the permission to be sad, frustrated and angry. We should acknowledge that this absolutely sucks, that we are all very tired, overwhelmed and sometimes hopeless—and that all of this is OK. Surely, this acceptance will not solve our problems, particularly for those who were already struggling to make ends meet or keep up with their numerous responsibilities for their loved ones. But in these divisive, vitriolic and isolating times, I hope this acknowledgment of our feelings could at least help us see the thread that connects all of us—that we are all trying to do our best and that, after two years, we are all exhausted.

I may not be your doctor, but I know your pain. And I love you, and I will pray for you. I hope you will do the same for us.

CHICKENPOX

From Page 8






olds by the end of next week (the vaccine is already approved to those 16 and older), Newsom's rule wouldn't take effect until next summer. That's not good enough. Though it's wise to wait for final approval for each age group, mandates should go into effect within weeks of that happening, not a full semester later.

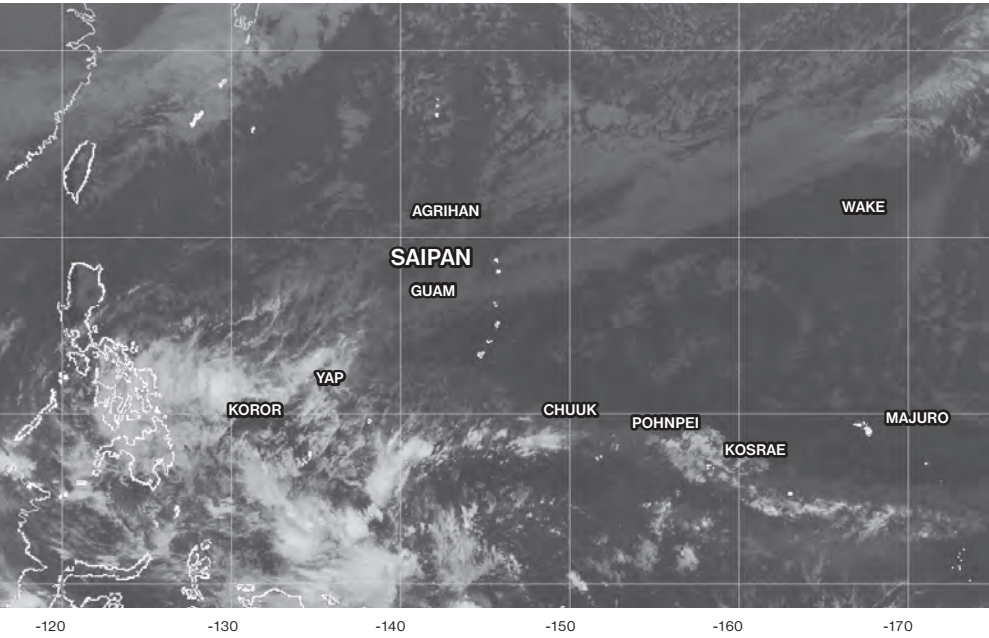
The most practical way to impose vaccine mandates on schools is for lawmakers to pass emergency legislation that empowers the Department of Public Health to make the required rules and change them as the situation evolves—including eliminating the personal belief exemption—but limit that authority to a year or two.

Omicron isn't waiting for legislative committee hearings and neither should the state.

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The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY	
									
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.		Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.		Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.	
86°	75°	86°	76°	85°	75°	85°	75°	85°	75°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 8:29 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

East to northeast winds and a few showers were over the Marianas this morning. Only a few on and off showers can be expected through the end of the year.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

onds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mp and, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html> and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	83° / 76°	
Yap	Thunderstorms	83° / 77°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Friday	6:41 AM	5:57 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Sunday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Monday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	2:37 AM	2:28 PM	-
Friday	3:39 AM	3:19 PM	-
Saturday	4:45 AM	4:17 PM	-
Sunday	5:53 AM	5:21 PM	-
Monday	7:00 AM	6:28 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Windy	73° / 61°	
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	39° / 21°	
Hong Kong	Sunny	73° / 63°	
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	80° / 70°	
London	Sunny	41° / 30°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	77° / 53°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	84° / 75°	
Melbourne	Showers	79° / 61°	
Miami	Partly Cloudy	79° / 67°	
New York	Sunny	23° / 15°	
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	52° / 43°	
Paris	Mostly Sunny	43° / 34°	
Busan	Mostly Sunny	54° / 36°	
Rome	Rain	48° / 36°	
Salem	Cloudy	44° / 34°	
San Francisco	Showers	56° / 45°	
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	34° / 27°	
Tokyo	Sunny	50° / 37°	
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	29° / 20°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
5:07 AM	High Tide	1.37	
10:07 AM	Low Tide	0.81	
3:59 PM	High Tide	1.83	
11:21 PM	Low Tide	-0.34	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2021

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6	UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7	UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily	UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
				UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	6	7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	6
TW9308	3:20PM	8:00PM	4, 5	OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	6
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	6	TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA				1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily	1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily	1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily	1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily	1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN				1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily	1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily	TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily	2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
ROTA TO GUAM				2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable	2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
GUAM TO ROTA				2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable	2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable	2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily	2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily	2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

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Business

Now is the time to build your credit

By COLIN BERESFORD
NERDWALLET

Sooner than you may realize, your credit score will start to matter.

A solid credit score can be the difference between qualifying for an apartment or a low-interest car loan or missing out. So to have credit ready when you need it, the time to start building a good and lengthy credit history is now.

There's more than one way to build credit, and it could be as simple as reporting your ongoing bill payments to the major credit bureaus. But keep in mind: Building credit takes diligence, particularly since missing payments can hurt your score for years to come.

What is credit and why does it matter?

Your credit score is a number that typically ranges between 300 and 850 and is calculated based on how reliably you've paid past debts, such as credit card bills. Lenders use your credit score to predict how likely you will repay debt.

Your credit score helps determine the loans you can receive, the interest you'll be charged, the credit cards you can qualify for and the properties you can rent. An employer



A solid credit score can be the difference between qualifying for an apartment or a low-interest car loan or missing out. So to have credit ready when you need it, the time to start building a good and lengthy credit history is now.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

can even check your credit history. Having a good credit score can save you money later on, mainly through lower interest rates when you secure a loan.

If you're starting with no credit history, you aren't alone. In the U.S., nearly 40% of people between the ages of 20 and 24 have little to no credit history to generate a score, according to the Consumer Finance and Protection

Bureau. Unfortunately, the same is true for roughly 20% of the population.

Building your credit might seem overwhelming if you haven't thought about it before, but there are many strategies to employ, even if you're just beginning. Start by establishing good habits with managing debt, such as not taking on more debt than you can afford, says Brittany Mollica, a certified financial planner

based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Missing payments will damage your score and can become a burden when you need to borrow money in the future.

"Getting in good habits of always paying your bills is really important," Mollica says. "You don't want to have to be

climbing out of a hole of all sorts of credit card debt that you've piled up, especially starting out early on."

Credit cards—and alternative cards

Credit cards can be a great tool to establish credit, but they can also damage your score if you take on more debt than you can handle.

If a parent or another trusted person in your life has a high credit limit and a long history of making timely payments, you could become an authorized user on their account and benefit from their good credit. This is one of the easiest ways to lengthen your credit history, says Blaine Thiederman, a certified financial planner in Arvada, Colorado.

Becoming an authorized user will also impact your credit utilization rate, or the amount of money you owe to lenders divided by the total credit available to you, which can help your credit score.

If you have your own income, you can apply for a credit card when you're 18 years old; otherwise, you have to wait until you are 21. A secured credit card is typically the best credit card to start with. A cash deposit backs

these cards, and since the credit card company can take that deposit if you miss payments, people with short or poor credit histories can qualify.

The deposit you have to make for a secured credit card could be a burden, and if that's the case, an alternative card might be better for you. These cards use income and bank account information to determine your creditworthiness rather than your credit score.

Monthly bills

If you live independently, payments for rent, utilities and phone bills can all be reported to credit bureaus. So paying those bills can build your credit if they're on time and you have them reported.

Unlike credit card payments, these payments aren't reported automatically and can require a third-party service, such as Experian Boost or UltraFICO, to make the credit bureaus aware of your payments.

Remember, these services sometimes require a fee and reporting your bill payments may not always impact your credit score; instead, they may just appear on your credit report.

US home prices surge 18.4% in October

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. home prices surged again in October as the housing market continues to boom in the wake of last year's coronavirus recession.

The S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller 20-city home price index, out Tuesday, climbed 18.4% in October from a year earlier. The gain marked a slight deceleration from a 19.1% year-over-year increase in September but was about in line with what economists had been expecting.

All 20 cities posted double-digit annual gains. The hottest markets were Phoenix (up 32.3%), Tampa (28.1%) and Miami (25.7%). Minneapolis and Chicago posted the smallest increases, 11.5% each.

The housing market has been strong thanks to rock-bottom mortgage rates, a limited supply of homes on the market, and pent-up demand from consumers locked in last year by the pandemic. Many Americans, tired of being cooped up at home during the pandemic, are looking to trade up from apartments to homes or to bigger houses.

"Home price growth will slow further in the year ahead, but continue to go up," said Danielle Hale, chief economist at Realtor.com. "As housing costs eat up a larger share of home purchaser's paychecks, buyers will get creative. Many will take advantage of ongoing workplace flexibility to move to the suburbs where de-

spite home price gains, many can still find a lower price per square foot than nearby cities."

It remains unclear if that shift is permanent or an aberration, said Craig Lazzara, managing director at S&P Dow Jones Indices.

"We have previously suggested that the strength in the U.S. housing market is being driven in part by a change in locational preferences as households react to the COVID pandemic," Lazzara said. "More data will be required to understand whether this demand surge represents an acceleration of purchases that would have occurred over the next several years, or reflects a more permanent secular change."

Elizabeth Holmes jury finishes fifth day of deliberations

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP)—The jury weighing fraud charges against former Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes left the court Tuesday without reaching a verdict after a fifth day of deliberations. Holmes is facing 11 criminal charges alleging that she duped investors and patients by hailing her company's blood-testing technology

as a medical breakthrough when in fact it was prone to wild errors.

The eight men and four women on the jury have been meeting in a San Jose, California, federal courthouse after absorbing reams of evidence in a three-month trial that captivated Silicon Valley.

The jurors are scheduled to resume their discussions

Wednesday morning.

Last week, the jury sent out two notes to U.S. District Judge Edward Davila—one making a swiftly rejected request to take their instructions home with them for further study and another that allowed them a replay of a 2013 recording of Holmes discussing Theranos' dealings with prospective investors.



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS CUC-RFP-22-005

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR LOWER BASE SEWER REPLACEMENT — PHASE II

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting a fee proposal from a professional archaeologist who meets the U.S. Department of Interior qualifications (36CFR61) to create a work plan to prepare information, data and documentation needed to conduct archaeological monitoring during construction of all areas identified by the CNMI HPO for the construction of a new sewer line on Rte. 314 — Lower Base Drive and Rte. 30 — Chalan Pale Arnold Road in Lower Base, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval of the USEPA.

The scope of Archaeological Services will include, but not be limited to:

1. Conduct background research to document the environmental and land-use histories of the project site.
2. Prepare a monitoring plan to the specifications of the Scope of Work and the guidelines for research designs.
3. Implement the monitoring plan activities following the approved plan.
4. Prepare an End of Fieldwork Letter that provides a general description of the project, work completed, burials recovered, sites and features identified.
5. Prepare a draft report summarizing the monitoring and data recovery activities & within six months of completing the fieldwork.
6. Prepare and submit, based on review comments, two final hard copies and one CD-ROM copy of the archaeological report to the HPO.
7. Prepare and submit revised CNMI Site Forms for previously recorded sites, as needed, and new site forms for all newly documented sites.
8. Submit all artifacts collected and pay all fees according to the Commonwealth Museum of History and Culture (CMHC) to the specifications of the current draft curation standards.

The RFP package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$100.00 for one RFP package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of the PROPOSAL must be submitted in a SEALED ENVELOPE marked "CUC-RFP-22-005: Archaeological Services for Lower Base Sewer Replacement — Phase II" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **January 27, 2021, at 10:00 AM (ChST). Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.**

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers who submit proposal determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from the proposal submitted by competing proposers.

All proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the RFP requirements in the course of proposer's preparation of the RFP under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the RFP under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This RFP and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 12, 2021** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copies to Nicolette Villagomez, Water/Wastewater Engineer, via email address nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan, CUC Senior Administrative Technician via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said RFP, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Nation

California 1st state to top 5M cases amid omicron surge

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—California became the first state to record more than 5 million known coronavirus infections, according to the state dashboard Tuesday, which was delayed by the holiday weekend.

The grim milestone, as reported by the California Department of Public Health, wasn't entirely unexpected in a state with 40 million residents poised for a surge in new infections amid holiday parties and family gatherings forced indoors by a series of

winter storms.

The first coronavirus case in California was confirmed Jan. 25, 2020. It took 292 days to get to 1 million infections on Nov. 11 of that year, and 44 days from then to top 2 million.

California's caseload is also ahead of other large states. Texas had more than 4.4 million and Florida topped 3.9 million as of Sunday.

California has recorded more than 75,500 deaths related to COVID-19.

The state has fared far bet-

ter than many other states that are dealing with a coronavirus surge, with areas in the Midwest and Northeast seeing the biggest jump in cases and hospitalizations amid frigid temperatures that have kept people indoors.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists California as a place with "high" transmission of the virus, along with nearly everywhere else in the country. But in the last week California averaged 16.4 new cases per 100,000 people, less than a

third of the national rate.

Meanwhile, coronavirus related hospitalizations have been rising slowly in California, up about 12% in the last 7 days to 4,401. That's less than half as many as during the late summer peak and one-fifth of a year ago, before vaccines were widely available.

On Tuesday, San Francisco announced it was canceling its New Year's Eve fireworks show because of the rising caseload, while Contra Costa County in the Bay Area an-

nounced that it would require masks to be worn in all public indoor places as of Wednesday.

Previously, some vaccinated people had been allowed to remove them.

Police: Gunman in Denver who killed 5 targeted some victims

DENVER (AP)—A gunman who went on a shooting rampage in several locations around the Denver area, killing five people and wounding two, targeted his victims based on previous personal and business dealings, authorities said Tuesday.

Lyndon James McLeod, 47, was also killed Monday night after he shot a police officer who confronted him in a busy shopping district in the Denver suburb of Lakewood. The officer managed to fire back at McLeod, killing him, Lakewood police spokesperson John Romero said.

Matt Clark, commander of the Denver Police Department's Major Crimes Division, said the gunman knew most of his victims but not the last person he shot—a clerk in a hotel in Lakewood's Belmar shopping area. Sarah Steck, 28, who died of her injuries Tuesday, was apparently targeted because of a dispute with the hotel, not with her, Clark said.

McLeod once owned a business in Denver called Flat Black Ink Corp. at an address that is now World Tattoo Studio, according to records from the Colorado Secretary of State's Office.

A man who answered the phone at World Tattoo Studio hung up after he was asked about McLeod on Tuesday evening.

The first shooting took place at a tattoo shop less than a mile (1.6 kilometers) from that address. Four of the victims, including three who died, were shot at two tattoo shops in the Denver area.

Denver Police Chief Paul Pazen said during a news conference that McLeod was on the radar of law enforcement and had been investigated in both 2020 and 2021. He declined to say what McLeod was investigated for but said charges were not filed against him.

The shootings started around 5:30 p.m. in central Denver along Broadway, a busy street lined with shops, bars and restaurants, where two women were killed and a man was injured but expected to survive, police said. Soon after, McLeod forced his way into a home that also housed a business nearby, pursued the occupants through the building and fired shots, but no one was injured, Clark said. Then a man was shot and killed in a home near Denver's Cheesman Park, he said.

Mom: 14-year-old shot by LA police 'died in my arms'



Soledad Peralta, mother of Valentina Orellana-Peralta, cries at a news conference outside Los Angeles Police Department Headquarters in Los Angeles, Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A 14-year-old was shopping for Christmas clothes last week with her mother when the pair heard screams and hid in a dressing room, where the girl was fatally shot by Los Angeles police after an officer fired a rifle at a suspect and a bullet pierced a wall, the family said Tuesday.

Valentina Orellana-Peralta died in her mother's arms last Thursday at a Burlington store in the San Fernando Valley's North Hollywood neighborhood. Her family said the teen loved skateboarding and had dreams of becoming an engineer to build robots.

After screams broke out in the store the day before Christmas Eve, the teenager locked the dressing room door.

"We sat down on a seat, holding each other, praying, when something hit my

daughter, Valentina, and threw us to the floor," Soledad Peralta said Tuesday. "And my daughter died in my arms. I couldn't do anything."

The teen's family stood outside Los Angeles Police Department headquarters on Tuesday, next to a large photo of Orellana-Peralta wreathed in flowers, to call for justice and remember their daughter.

Speaking in Spanish and choking back tears as sirens wailed in the background in downtown LA, they said they had left Chile to get away from violence and injustice in search of a better life in the U.S.

The LAPD on Monday posted an edited video package online that included 911 calls, radio transmissions, body camera footage and surveillance video from the Thursday shooting at a store crowded with holiday shop-

pers. The department's policy is to release video from critical incidents, such as police shootings, within 45 days.

The family's attorneys—including civil rights lawyer Ben Crump—have sent a letter to the LAPD asking for more video.

Surveillance video showed the suspect attacking two women, including one who fell to the floor before he dragged her by her feet through the store's aisles as she tried to crawl away.

Multiple people including store employees called police to report a man striking customers with a bike lock. One caller told a 911 dispatcher that the man had a gun. No firearm—only the bike lock—was recovered at the scene.

The early surveillance footage showed a man carrying a bicycle up the store's escalator

to the second floor, where he wandered around, seemingly disoriented, clutching a cable-style bike lock. At times he stood motionless, staring into the distance.

The footage later showed the man on the down escalator attacking a woman, who managed to escape his grip and run out of the store.

The man then left the store for a minute and a half, police said. After he returned, according to the video, he repeatedly beat a woman with a bike lock while she cowered on the floor. As she tried to escape, he dragged her through the aisle toward the dressing rooms.

In bodycam video, armed officers entered the store and approached the suspect. One held a rifle and pushed to the front of the pack as the officers went through the store in formation.

China calls on US to protect space station from satellites

BEIJING (AP)—China is calling on the United States to protect a Chinese space station and its three-member crew after Beijing complained that satellites launched by Elon Musk's SpaceX nearly struck the station.

A foreign ministry spokesman accused Washington on Tuesday of ignoring its treaty obligations to protect the safety of the Tiangong station's three-member crew following the July 1 and Oct. 21 incidents.

The Tiangong performed "evasive maneuvers" to "prevent a potential collision" with Starlink satellites launched by Space Exploration Technologies Corp., the government said in a Dec. 6

complaint to the U.N. Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The United States should "take immediate measures to prevent such incidents from happening again," said the spokesman, Zhao Lijian.

Zhao accused Washington of failing to carry out its obligations to "protect the safety of astronauts" under a 1967 treaty on the peaceful use of space.

The first module of the Tiangong was launched in April. Its first crew returned to Earth in September following a 90-day mission. The second crew of two men and one woman arrived Oct. 16 for a six-month mission.



Musk

Asia

Coronavirus cases surge across Australia as omicron explodes

SYDNEY (AP)—Coronavirus cases surged across Australia on Wednesday as an outbreak of the omicron variant exploded, prompting Prime Minister Scott Morrison to schedule an emergency national cabinet meeting.

The surge has already overwhelmed testing stations, prompted new vaccine mandates and caused at least one state to cut back on elective surgeries.

New infections in Sydney and surrounding parts of New South Wales state skyrocketed to more than 11,000, up from 6,000 a day earlier. Victoria state also reported a record 3,700 cases, up by more than 1,000 from the previous record set on Tuesday.

Morrison said the nation's leaders would meet ahead of schedule on Thursday.

"As omicron continues to go forward we will see further pressures, but states and territories are working very closely on their plans to deal with those challenges," Morrison told reporters.

He said he hoped the meeting would help give a clearer definition on what constituted a close contact and which tests should be used in different circumstances as case numbers ballooned.

Other states also reported surging numbers, with more than 1,500 new infections in Queensland, 1,400 in South Australia, 138 in the Australian Capital Territory and 55 in Tasmania. Queensland health officials said about 80% of cases were the omicron variant.

Neighboring New Zealand also reported its first case of

possible community exposure to omicron, when a returning traveler tested positive after leaving quarantine. However, health authorities said the traveler wasn't considered highly infectious and there was no evidence yet of any community spread.

South Australia announced it would place limits on elective surgery and mandate vaccine booster shots for frontline health care workers.

State Premier Steven Marshall said South Australia would no longer be conducting screening tests for interstate travel because it doesn't have the capacity.

"Omicron is moving too quickly," Marshall said, adding that resources needed to be focused on the "very imminent" increase in hospitalizations.

Omicron surge may be inevitable in Asia

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Much of Asia has largely managed to keep omicron at bay even as the variant rages in other parts of the world, but the region that is home to most of the globe's population is bracing for what may be an inevitable surge.

Strict quarantine rules for arrivals and widespread mask wearing have helped slow the spread of the highly contagious variant in Asia.

Countries such as Japan, South Korea and Thailand quickly reinstated entry and quarantine restrictions in recent weeks after relaxing them in the fall.

But cases are mounting, and experts say the next few months will be critical. Those fears have been amplified by doubts about the effectiveness of the Chinese-made vaccines used in China and much of the

developing world.

"Once the pace picks up, its upsurge would be extremely fast," said Dr. Shigeru Omi, a top medical adviser to Japan's government.

In India, which has been getting back to normal after a devastating COVID-19 outbreak earlier this year, omicron is once again raising fears, with more than 700 cases reported in the country of nearly 1.4 billion people.



Editor of "Stand News" Patrick Lam, second from left, is arrested by police officers in Hong Kong, Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2021. AP

HK police raid news outlet, arrest 6

HONG KONG (AP)—Hong Kong police were raiding the office of an online news outlet on Wednesday after arresting six people for conspiracy to publish a seditious publication.

More than 200 officers were taking part in the search, police said. They had a warrant to seize relevant journalistic materials under a national security law enacted last year.

The six were arrested early

Wednesday under a colonial-era crimes ordinance for conspiracy to publish a seditious publication, and searches of their residences were underway, police said.

According to the local South China Morning Post newspaper, police arrested one current and one former editor at Stand News, as well as four former board members including singer and activist Denise Ho.

Police did not identify

those who were arrested but Stand News posted a video on Facebook of police officers at the home of a deputy editor, Ronson Chan, to investigate the alleged crime. Chan is also chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association.

Stand News earlier this year said it would suspend subscriptions and remove most opinion pieces and columns from its website due to the national security law. Six board members had also resigned from the company.

World

Russian court shuts rights group

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia's highest court on Tuesday shut down one of the country's oldest and most prominent human rights organizations, the latest move in a relentless crackdown on rights activists, independent media and opposition supporters.

The Supreme Court's ruling to close Memorial, an international human rights group that drew international acclaim for its studies of political repression in the Soviet Union, sparked international outrage.

Memorial is made up of more than 50 smaller groups in Russia and abroad. It was declared a "foreign agent" in 2016—a label that implies additional government scrutiny and carries strong pejorative connotations that can discredit the targeted organization. Prosecutors said the group repeatedly failed to identify itself as a foreign agent and tried to conceal the designation, the accusations rejected by Memorial.

During the hearing, prosecutors also charged that Memorial "creates a false image of the USSR as a terrorist state," a claim the group said revealed the authorities' real motive.

"The Supreme Court's ruling confirmed once again that the history of political terror organized and directed by the government isn't an academic issue that is interesting only for experts, but an acute problem of today," Memorial said in a statement. "Memorial embodies the Russian citizens' need to know the truth about the country's tragic path and the fate of millions. No one would be able to 'liquidate' that need."

The group said it would appeal the verdict and pledged to continue its work.

"Of course, nothing is over with this," Maria Eismont, one of the lawyers that represented the group in court, said after the ruling. "We will appeal, and Memorial will live on with the people—because it's the people behind it serving this great cause first and foremost. The work will continue."

A crowd that gathered in front of the courthouse on Tuesday erupted into chants of "Disgrace!" in response to the ruling. Police detained several people who picketed the courthouse.

The Council of Europe's

Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić, described the move as "devastating news" and "a dark day for civil society in the Russian Federation."

Amnesty International called Memorial's closure "a blatant attack on civil society that seeks to blur the national memory of state repression" and "a grave insult to victims of the Russian Gulag."

U.S. Ambassador John Sullivan deplored the court's verdict as "a blatant and tragic attempt to suppress freedom of expression and erase history."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian expressed "indignation and concern" at the shutdown of the NGO Memorial International, calling it "a terrible loss for the Russian people."

"This announcement is deeply worrying about the future of historical research and the defense of human rights in Russia," he said in a statement.

Memorial's sister organization, the Memorial Human Rights Center, is up for closure as well, with a court hearing Wednesday morning in Moscow City Court.

WORLD BRIEFS

Fire contained after reported Israeli attack on Syrian port

BEIRUT (AP)—Firefighters contained a blaze that raged for hours in Syria's port of Latakia on Tuesday, officials said, hours after Israel launched missiles from the Mediterranean Sea, igniting the fire in the container terminal. It was the second such attack on the vital facility this month. The early morning raid targeted the port that handles most of the imports to Syria, a country ravaged by a decade-old civil war and Western-imposed sanctions. Another attack took place Dec. 7, when Syrian media reported Israeli warplanes hit the container terminal, also igniting a major fire. Syrian officials and state media said Tuesday's attack caused more damage and the explosion could be heard miles away. Syrian air defenses were activated when the missiles started to fall on the terminal at around 3:20 a.m., state media reported.

Sudan officials say defunct mine collapses, kills 38 people

CAIRO (AP)—Sudanese authorities said at least 38 people were killed Tuesday when a defunct gold mine collapsed in West Kordofan province. The country's state-run mining company said in a statement

the collapse of the closed, non-functioning mine took place in the village of Fuja 700 kilometers (435 miles) south of the capital of Khartoum. It said there were also injuries without giving a specific tally. Local media reported that several shafts collapsed at the Dar-saya mine, and that besides the dead at least eight injured people were taken to a local hospital. The mining company posted images on Facebook showing villagers gathering at the site as at least two dredgers worked to find possible survivors and bodies.

Five slashed bodies found on roadside in southern Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP)—The slashed-up bodies of five men were found on a roadside in southern Mexico on Tuesday, authorities reported. The bodies were lying on a road near the city of Iguala in the Pacific coast state of Guerrero. The state prosecutors office said all the men had knife wounds on their faces and necks, suggesting their throats had been cut. The bodies were found in an area that has been the scene of frequent turf battles between drug gangs. There are also vigilante-style forces active in the area that are sometimes associated with the gangs. Guerrero is home to the Pa-

cific coast resort of Acapulco, farther south. Also Tuesday, authorities announced that skeletal remains found in November in the northern border state of Sonora were from 25 different people.

World's fair in Dubai warns of possible closures over virus

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—The multibillion-dollar world's fair in Dubai has warned that some venues on site may shut down as coronavirus cases rapidly rise in the United Arab Emirates. Dubai's Expo 2020 said that virus outbreaks among staff may force some parts of the fair to "close temporarily for deep cleaning and sanitization," without elaborating on the scope or the location of the infections. The UAE's daily virus caseload has skyrocketed by a multiple of 37 in just the last three weeks after the arrival of the omicron variant. The vague statement from Dubai's government-run media office on Monday underscores the daunting challenges of hosting among the world's first major in-person events amid a still-raging pandemic. The fair opened in October after a year's delay as the UAE bet that its rapid vaccine rollout would allow its economy to avoid the closures that have paralyzed much of the West.

Environment

The cost of this year's 10 worst climate disasters: \$170 billion

By DAMIAN SHEPHERD
BLOOMBERG NEWS

Ten of this year's most destructive weather events cost a combined \$170 billion in damages, according to a new study.

Hurricane Ida, a tropical storm that pummeled much of the eastern U.S. with lashing rain in August, killed at least 95 people and cost the economy \$65 billion. A month earlier, floods in Europe caused 240 deaths and an economic loss of \$43 billion, according to research published by U.K. charity Christian Aid. Floods in China's Henan province in July killed more than 300 and cost in excess of \$17 billion.

"The costs of climate change have been grave this year," said Kat Kramer, Christian Aid's climate policy lead and author of the report. "It is clear that the world is not on track to ensure a safe and prosperous world."

This year is expected to be the sixth time global natural disasters have cost more than \$100 billion, the report stated, citing insurer Aon Plc. All six of those years have happened since 2011.

The report's authors estimated damages based on insured losses, meaning the



true costs of these disasters are likely to be even higher. Calculations are usually costlier in richer countries due to higher property values and insurance, while some of this year's deadliest weather events hit poorer counties that contributed little to global warming.

South Sudan has been struck by floods that forced almost a million people to leave their homes, while East Africa has been ravaged by drought. That highlights the injustice of the climate crisis, said Christian Aid, which warned that such events will continue in the

absence of concrete action to slash emissions.

Mohamed Adow, director of Kenya-based think tank Power Shift Africa, said the continent has "borne the brunt" of some of the deadliest, most expensive climate impacts. Severe droughts in

East Africa, which are expected to last until mid-2022, are "pushing communities to the brink," Adow warned.

The Paris Agreement on

In this photo from Sept. 1, 2021, a mailbox is seen in floodwater in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana. Hurricane Ida made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane on Aug. 29 in Louisiana and brought flooding and wind damage along the Gulf Coast.

(BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES/TNS)

global warming, which aims to hold the increase in global temperatures to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, will not achieve its goals unless more urgent action is taken, according to the report. More needs to be done in 2022 to provide financial help to vulnerable nations, including a fund to deal with the damage caused by climate change—something that was not delivered at this year's global climate talks in Glasgow, according to the study.

"It was bitterly disappointing to leave COP26 without a fund set up to help people who are suffering from permanent losses from climate change," said Nushrat Chowdhury, Christian Aid's climate justice adviser in Bangladesh. "Bringing that fund to life needs to be a global priority in 2022."

Biden administration moves to expand solar power on US land

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP)—U.S. officials announced approval Tuesday of two large-scale solar projects in California and moved to open up public lands in other Western states to potential solar power development, as part of the Biden administration's effort to counter climate change by shifting from fossil fuels.

The Interior Department approved the Arica and Victory Pass solar projects on federal land in Riverside County east of Los Angeles. Combined they would generate up to 465 megawatts of electricity, or enough to power about 132,000 homes, according to San Francisco-based developer Clearway Energy. Approval of a third solar farm planned for 500 megawatts is expected in coming days, officials said.

The Interior Department also Tuesday issued a call to nominate land for development within "solar energy zones" in Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico that combined cover about 140 square miles (360 square kilometers).

The invitation to developers comes as officials under Democratic President Joe Biden promote renewable wind and solar power on



In this Dec. 11, 2017, file photo, solar arrays line the desert floor of the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone as part of the 179 megawatt Switch Station 1 and Switch Station 2 Solar Projects north of Las Vegas.

(MICHAEL QUINE/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL VIA AP, FILE)

public lands and offshore to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are warming the planet. That's a pronounced change from Republican President Donald Trump's emphasis on coal mining and oil and gas drilling.

Biden suffered a huge blow to his climate agenda this week, as opposition from West Virginia Democrat Sen. Joe Manchin tanked the administration's centerpiece climate and social services legislation. The administration also has been forced to resume oil and natural gas lease sales in the Gulf

of Mexico and numerous western states, after a federal judge sided with Republican-led states that sued when Biden suspended the sales.

During a Tuesday conference call with reporters, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland did not directly address a question about the faltering climate bill and instead pointed to clean energy provisions in the bipartisan infrastructure bill signed into law last month.

"We fully intend to meet our clean energy goals," Haaland said. She said the Trump administration stalled clean energy by shuttering renewable

energy offices at the Bureau of Land Management and undermining long-term agreements, such as a conservation plan tied to solar development in the California desert.

"We are rebuilding that capacity," Haaland said.

But without the climate bill, tax incentives to build large-scale solar will drop to 10% of a developer's total capital costs by 2024, instead of rising to 30%, said Xiaojing Sun, head solar researcher at industry consulting firm Wood Mackenzie.

Incentives for residential-scale solar would go away completely by 2024, she said.

"It will significantly slow down the growth of solar," Sun said.

However, she added that streamlining access to federal land could help the industry, as large solar farms on non-federal lands face growing local opposition and cumbersome zoning laws.

The Bureau of Land Management oversees almost a quarter-billion acres of land, primarily in Western states. Agency director Tracy-Stone Manning said boosting renewable energy is now one of its top priorities.

Thousands of cranes killed by bird flu in northern Israel

JERUSALEM (AP)—A bird flu outbreak in northern Israel has killed at least 5,200 migratory cranes and forced farmers to slaughter hundreds of thousands of chickens as authorities try to contain what they say is the deadliest wildlife disaster in the nation's history.

Uri Naveh, a senior scientist at the Israel Parks and Nature Authority, said the situation is not yet under control.

"Many of the birds are dead in the middle of the water body so it's difficult for them to be taken out," he said Monday.

Environmental Protection Minister Tamar Zandberg called the crisis "the most serious damage to wildlife in the history of the country."

"The extent of the damage is still unclear," she tweeted.

Yaron Michaeli, spokesman for the Hula Lake park, where the crane population is centered, said workers were removing the carcasses as quickly as possible, fearing they could infect other wildlife.

Dafna Yurista, spokeswoman for the Agriculture Ministry, said half a million chickens in the area were being slaughtered to prevent

the disease from spreading.

About 500,000 cranes pass through Israel each year on the way to Africa and a small number stay behind, Michaeli said. This year, an estimated 30,000 cranes stayed in Israel for the winter.

Michaeli said it is believed that the cranes were infected by smaller birds that had contact with farms suffering from outbreaks.

Israeli media carried photos of workers in white hazmat suits collecting crane carcasses after the birds were first found to be sick about 10 days ago.

Michaeli said the death toll among cranes appears to have stabilized in recent days.

"This is a good sign," he said. "They might be starting to get over this. We hope very much."

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's office said officials from the agriculture, environment and health ministries were monitoring the situation. There was no immediate information about infections among people, it said.

The cleanup is going more slowly than expected. "We are trying to see if there's any other solutions," Naveh said.

Life & Style

‘Music Man’ revival on hold as Jackman is infected



The New York City Ballet performs an excerpt from “The Nutcracker”, as part of the tree lighting ceremony at Lincoln Center, on Nov. 28, 2005 in New York. Remaining performances of “The Nutcracker” ballet have been canceled due to positive tests for coronavirus, the New York City Ballet announced Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021.

AP PHOTO/HENNY RAY ABRAMS, FILE

NYC Ballet cancels remainder of ‘Nutcracker’ performances

NEW YORK (AP)—Remaining performances of “The Nutcracker” ballet have been canceled due to positive tests for coronavirus, the New York City Ballet announced Tuesday.

The famed ballet by George Balanchine, a staple of the winter performing arts season in New York, was scheduled to present performances through Sunday at Lincoln Center’s

David H. Koch Theater.

“While New York City Ballet had hoped to resume performances this evening, we have made the decision that continuing to perform at this time would not be in the best interest of the NYCB community, whose health and safety is our number one priority,” NYCB Executive Director Kathy Brown and Artistic Director Jonathan Stafford

said in a statement. “We are extraordinarily proud of everyone who safely came together to present 30 beautiful performances of George Balanchine’s The Nutcracker in recent weeks, and we are also very grateful to the thousands of people who attended.”

Vaccine restrictions had limited audience members to those old enough to be vaccinated or to younger children

with a negative PCR test.

Ticketholders for canceled shows will be able to receive a full refund or make a tax-deductible, charitable donation to the ballet in the amount of the value of their tickets.

The ballet company has performed “The Nutcracker” every year but one since its 1954 premiere. Last year’s shows were canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

‘No culture, no future’: Belgian artists decry virus rules

BRUSSELS (AP)—Thousands of Belgian performers, cinema operators, event organizers and others joined together Sunday to protest the government’s decision to close down the country’s cultural life to stem the spread of the surging omicron variant.

Waving posters reading “The show must go on” or “No culture, no future,” the crowd demonstrated peacefully despite the pouring rain, accusing the government of unfairly targeting the culture industry with the new virus restrictions.

Under the measures, which

took effect Sunday, events like Christmas markets are allowed to continue, despite their boisterous, chaotic gluhwein (mulled wine) parties, and restaurants and bars are allowed to stay open with some new restrictions. Even the scientific committee advising the Belgian

government had not asked for the culture industry closures, leaving virologist Marc Van Ranst to ponder that in Belgium “gluhwein beat culture.”

Scores of movie theaters and other venues disregarded the closure order, according to state broadcaster RTBF.

NEW YORK—The Broadway revival of “The Music Man” has been one of the hottest tickets in town and it has limped along without co-star Sutton Foster. But now the show is being shuttered until the new year because Hugh Jackman has tested positive for the coronavirus.

Jackman took to social media Tuesday to announce that he had tested positive. He says

that although his symptoms are mild with only a scratchy throat and a runny nose, he needs to quarantine.

Some Broadway shows have closed for several days and some have folded completely because of virus cases “Thoughts of a Colored Man” joined “Waitress” and “Jagged Little Pill” as shows that have closed this winter due in part to rising infection rates. **(PR)**

‘Da Vinci Code’ author settles lawsuit alleging secret life

BOSTON (AP)—“The Da Vinci Code” author Dan Brown and his ex-wife have agreed to settle a lawsuit in which she alleged he led a secret life during their marriage that included several affairs.

Blythe Brown also claimed credit for inspiring much of his work and coming up with the premise for “The Da Vinci Code.” She also alleged that Brown hid scores of future projects worth “millions” from

The couple agreed to voluntarily dismiss the lawsuit and “any and all claims and counterclaims in this matter,” according to court papers filed Monday in a New Hampshire court.



Brown

her, including a television series as well as a children’s book.

At the time of the lawsuit, Dan Brown said he was “stunned” by the allegations and called the complaint

“written without regard for the truth.” He said he never misled his ex-wife on their finances during their divorce and that she ended up with half their holdings after they split up.

The couple divorced in 2019 after 21 years of marriage.

Brown, a New Hampshire native, has had a string of bestsellers but is best known for “The Da Vinci Code,” a puzzle-filled thriller that introduced readers to the notion that Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene were married with children. The plot outraged church officials and scholars.

Young woman’s temper has siblings on edge

DEAR ABBY: I have a younger sister I love dearly. I respect and admire her. “Elise” is intelligent and talented. She is a minister’s wife and a mother to small children. Due to some unfortunate family circumstances when she was young, she has some emotional scars she’s trying to overcome. Sometimes at family gatherings she’ll “explode” and lash out at whoever triggered her. Her outbursts usually take us all by surprise.

How do we, as siblings who have grown up in the same environment, handle this? We don’t think our childhoods so terrible, although we did have some challenges, and our daddy does have narcissistic tendencies. He actually recognizes that and is trying to improve himself. Sometimes we feel she makes mountains out of molehills, but we want to be sensitive to her pain. I’m concerned she’ll end up controlling our family gatherings in a negative way if these flare-ups don’t stop. What do you think could be done?

BEFUDDLED BIG SIS

DEAR BIG SIS: What could (and should) be done is an intervention by you and your siblings in which Elise is advised to seek professional help for her explosive anger issues. If she refuses and her behavior continues, let her know you support her but can no longer include her.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My husband’s personality changes completely when he drinks, and not for the better. He brags, repeats himself and presents in a way that’s annoying and embarrassing. His alcohol personality will never change—it is who he is. He’s been like this for the entire 13 years I’ve been with him.

He drinks two to three times a week, at most, and says I “over-react” to his personality change. He tells me I shouldn’t get so frustrated, but I don’t want to be around my husband when he drinks. Can you advise me how to live with him when he’s drunk? By the way, it doesn’t take much for him to get this way—three beers. Could he be having a reaction to the alcohol?

FED UP IN SAN DIEGO

DEAR FED UP: That’s possible. Some individuals are more sensitive to alcohol than others. Whether it takes three beers or simply sniffing a cork to get your husband loaded, his drinking is causing a problem in your marriage.

It’s time for you to locate a chapter of Al-Anon (al-anon.org) and attend some of the meetings. This organization was created decades ago to help the friends and family members of people who have an alcohol problem—which your husband definitely has. You are far from alone in having this problem, which you will realize once you get there. Please don’t wait. Your reaction to his personality change is understandable.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



DEAR ABBY: I have been having some hard times in school. I love my teacher, but I have been getting in trouble lately. She is also my coach. What should I do? Should I take her criticism or drop out of the sport and band? HELP!!

HARD TIMES IN IDAHO

DEAR HARD TIMES: I’m glad you asked. The mature thing to do would be to talk to your teacher and see if you can mend fences. If you enjoy the sport and playing with the band, to do otherwise would only be further punishing yourself.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order “How to Have a Lovely Wedding.” Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



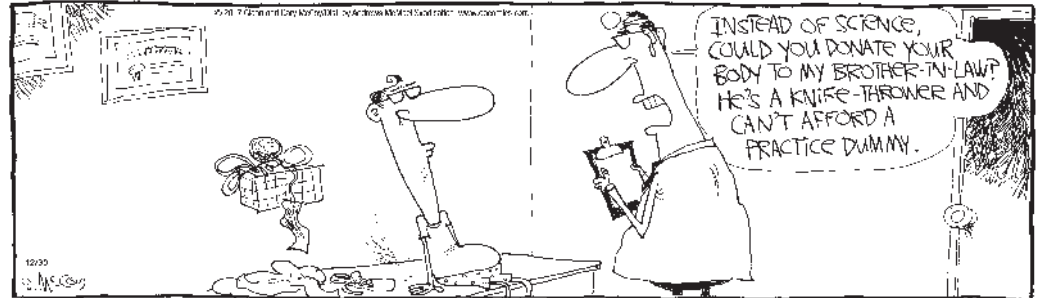
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

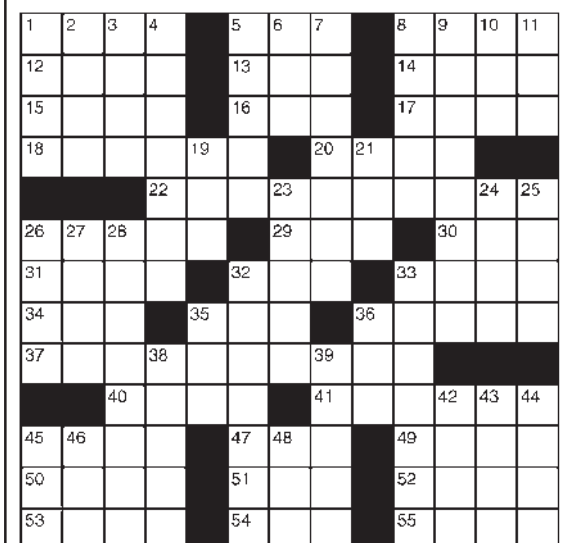
1 Withstand
5 Bro's sib
8 IRS agent
12 Rim
13 Indian bread
14 Head light?
15 "May I — service!"
16 Year in Mexico
17 Baltic Sea feeder
18 Surround
20 Cellar supply
22 "Okay!"
26 Skewered Thai recipe
29 Water (Fr.)
30 Itinerary word
31 Pond duck
32 Low isle
33 Thaw
34 Bruins legend
35 Stetson, e.g.

DOWN

1 Actress
2 Paradise
3 Enthusiastic
4 Thumbs-down
5 Major mix-up
6 Author Fleming
7 Winter "no school" time
8 Daring swimwear
9 Renovated
10 Pub pint
11 Fish-fowl link
19 Actress
21 Terre Haute sch.
23 "Swell!"
24 Fixes a squeak
25 See socially
26 Pack cargo
27 Aviation prefix
28 Seasoning herb
32 Beach robes
33 Orchestra leader
35 QVC alternative
36 Evening hrs.
38 Sorta
39 Lustful
42 Vicinity
43 Candied veggies
44 Skewer
45 Madrid Mrs.
46 Charged bit
48 Romance

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterday's answer 12-30



STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Eliza Dushku, 41; Tyrese Gibson, 43; Laila Ali, 44; Meredith Vieira, 68.

Happy Birthday: Surround yourself with individuals who bring value to your life and contribute to your mental, physical and emotional well-being. Your happiness is dependent on the decisions you make. Don't be afraid to do things differently or to change course midstream. Follow your heart, and indulge in what brings you joy. Seize the moment, and take control of your life and your future. Your numbers are 9, 12, 23, 26, 33, 38, 44.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Go over money matters, and make sure you've taken care of anything that needs to be updated before the year ends. Leave nothing to chance or in someone else's hands. A last-minute adjustment will lead to financial gain. ★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You've got the moves, so don't hesitate to make things happen. Say what's on your mind, and set standards for others to follow. Don't wait for someone to initiate change; it's up to you to do what's best for you. ★★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You'll have plenty of energy, so put it to good use. Take the initiative to finish what you start. Tie up loose ends, and start thinking about what you want to do next. Cut ties with people who mistreat you. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You'll be in the mood to make positive personal changes. Partnerships and putting plans in motion that bring you closer to someone you love

are favored. Leave nothing to chance; say what's on your mind. Romance is in the stars. ★★★★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You may want to be wild and crazy, but don't take risks that damage your reputation. Concentrate on activities that lead to personal growth, self-improvement and less drama. The aim is to gain respect, not to overreact or do something you regret. ★★★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Get together with friends or spend quality time with your love. Discuss your plans, and prepare to head in a direction that ensures stability and personal security. Don't overreact or make assumptions. Size up situations, and do what's necessary to maintain peace. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Reevaluate your life, and eliminate what no longer matters to you. Closing one year and beginning another with a plan will lead to a brighter future. Stop waffling; let go of the past, and move forward with enthusiasm. ★★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): A creative pastime will spark interest. Entertain the thought of taking a course or develop something that brings you joy into a lucrative endeavor. Don't limit your potential; take advantage of what you have to offer, and further your interests. ★★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Don't be fooled by what others say. Verify information before you pass it along. Concentrate on getting things done. Don't share personal information with anyone who may use it against you. Leave money and possessions in a

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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safe place. ★★★

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Don't waffle; if there is something you want to change, do so with enthusiasm. Take responsibility for what unfolds, and you'll appreciate the rewards that follow. Use your power of persuasion to enlist the help of others. Romance is on the rise. ★★★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Keep your life simple and your overhead down. Spend more time working on a schedule that will help you get in shape. Be ready to take on new adventures. Hard work will pay off. ★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Tag along with someone who shares your interests, and you'll get a different perspective regarding what's possible. Don't hesitate to let your intuition lead the way. Unleash your creativity, and you'll discover a unique way to bring in additional cash. ★★★★★

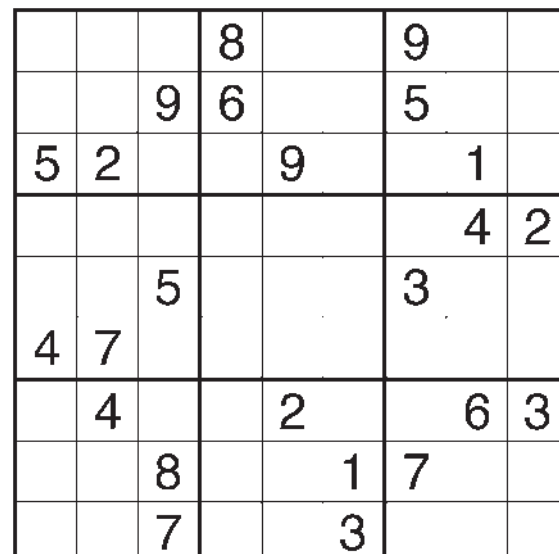
Birthday Baby: You are sophisticated, direct and personable. You are persistent and irresistible.

☾ Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☼ You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼☼ Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼☼ Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼☼ Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



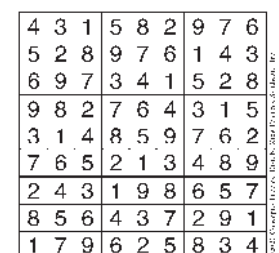
Difficulty Level ★★★

12/30

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer



Difficulty Level: ★★★

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them. Circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

HAVING A SHINDIG

Solution: 5 letters



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12/30


Activities, Ball, Band, Bartender, Bash, Beverages, Bubble, Budget, Casual, Chairs, Chat, Chef, Cups, Cutlery, Dance, Décor, Dine, Dish, Family, Favor, Feast, Festive, Food, Gala, Game, Gather, Hats, Host, Invitation, Jubilee, Large, Laugh, Linens, Memorable, Music, Napkins, Party, Potluck, Signage, Socialize, Supplies, Table, Tent, Toast, Upbeat, Utensil, Venues

Yesterday's Answer: Light

The NEW Treasures 46 and 47 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6430.

John Madden, Hall of Fame coach and broadcaster, dies at 85

By JOSH DUBOW
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

 John Madden, the Hall of Fame coach turned broadcaster whose exuberant calls combined with simple explanations provided a weekly soundtrack to NFL games for three decades, died Tuesday morning, the league said. He was 85.

The NFL said he died unexpectedly and did not detail a cause.

Madden gained fame in a decade-long stint as the coach of the renegade Oakland Raiders, making it to seven AFC title games and winning the Super Bowl following the 1976 season. He compiled a 103-32-7 regular-season record, and his .759 winning percentage is the best among NFL coaches with more than 100 games.

But it was his work after prematurely retiring as coach at age 42 that made Madden truly a household name. He educated a football nation with his use of the telestrator on broadcasts; entertained millions with his interjections of “Boom!” and “Doink!” throughout games; was an omnipresent pitchman selling restaurants, hardware stores and beer; became the face of “Madden NFL Football,” one of the most successful sports video games of all-time; and was a best-selling author.

Most of all, he was the pre-eminent television sports analyst for most of his three decades calling games, winning an unprecedented 16 Emmy Awards for outstanding sports analyst/personality, and covering 11 Super Bowls for four networks from 1979-2009.

“People always ask, are you a coach or a broadcaster or a video game guy?” he said when was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. “I’m a coach, always been a coach.”

He started his broadcasting career at CBS after leaving coaching in great part because of his fear of flying. He and Pat Summerall became the network’s top announcing duo. Madden then helped give Fox credibility as a major network when he moved there in 1994, and went on to call prime-time games at ABC and NBC before retiring following Pittsburgh’s thrilling 27-23 win over Arizona in the 2009 Super Bowl.

“I am not aware of anyone who has made a more meaningful impact on the National Football League than John Madden, and I know of no one who loved the game more,” Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said in a statement.

Burly and a little unkempt, Madden earned a place in America’s heart with a lik-



Former Oakland Raiders coach John Madden gestures toward a bust of himself during his enshrinement into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, Aug. 5, 2006.

able, unpretentious style that was refreshing in a sports world of spiraling salaries and prima donna stars. He rode from game to game in his own bus because he suffered from claustrophobia and had stopped flying. For a time, Madden gave out a “turducken”—a chicken stuffed inside a duck stuffed inside a turkey—to the outstanding player in the Thanksgiving game that he called.

“Nobody loved football more than Coach. He was football,” NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement. “He was an incredible sounding board to me and so many others. There will never be another John Madden, and we will forever be indebted to him for all he did to make football and the NFL what it is today.”

When he finally retired from the broadcast booth, leaving NBC’s “Sunday Night Football,” colleagues universally praised Madden’s passion for the sport, his preparation, and his ability to explain an often-

complicated game in down-to-earth terms.

Al Michaels, Madden’s broadcast partner for seven years on ABC and NBC, said working with him “was like hitting the lottery.”

“He was so much more than just football—a keen observer of everything around him and a man who could carry on a smart conversation about hundreds and hundreds of topics. The term ‘Renaissance Man’ is tossed around a little too loosely these days, but John was as close as you can come,” Michaels said.

For anyone who heard Madden exclaim “Boom!” while breaking down a play, his love of the game was obvious.

“For me, TV is really an extension of coaching,” Madden wrote in “Hey, Wait a Minute! (I Wrote a Book!).”

“My knowledge of football has come from coaching. And on TV, all I’m trying to do is pass on some of that knowledge to viewers.”

Madden was raised in Daly

City, California. He played on both the offensive and defensive lines for Cal Poly in 1957-58 and earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the school.

Madden was chosen to the all-conference team and was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles, but a knee injury ended his hopes of a pro playing career. Instead, Madden got into coaching, first at Hancock Junior College and then as defensive coordinator at San Diego State.

Al Davis brought him to the Raiders as a linebackers coach in 1967, and Oakland went to the Super Bowl in his first year in the pros. He replaced John Rauch as head coach after the 1968 season at age 32, beginning a remarkable 10-year run.

With his demonstrative demeanor on the sideline and disheveled look, Madden was the ideal coach for the collection of castoffs and misfits that made up those Raiders teams.

“Sometimes guys were disciplinarians in things that

didn’t make any difference. I was a disciplinarian in jumping offsides; I hated that,” Madden once said. “Being in bad position and missing tackles, those things. I wasn’t, ‘Your hair has to be combed.’”

The Raiders responded.

“I always thought his strong suit was his style of coaching,” quarterback Ken Stabler once said. “John just had a great knack for letting us be what we wanted to be, on the field and off the field. ... How do you repay him for being that way? You win for him.”

And boy, did they ever. Many years, the only problem was the playoffs.

Madden went 12-1-1 in his first season, losing the AFL title game 17-7 to Kansas City. That pattern repeated itself during his tenure; the Raiders won the division title in seven of his first eight seasons, but went 1-6 in conference title games during that span.

Still, Madden’s Raiders played in some of the sport’s most memorable games of

the 1970s, games that helped change rules in the NFL. There was the “Holy Roller” in 1978, when Stabler purposely fumbled forward before being sacked on the final play. The ball rolled and was batted to the end zone before Dave Casper recovered it for the winning touchdown against San Diego.

The most famous of those games went against the Raiders in the 1972 playoffs at Pittsburgh. With the Raiders leading 7-6 and 22 seconds left, the Steelers had a fourth-and-10 from their 40. Terry Bradshaw’s desperation pass deflected off either Oakland’s Jack Tatum or Pittsburgh’s Frenchy Fuqua to Franco Harris, who caught it at his shoe tops and ran in for a TD.

In those days, a pass that bounced off an offensive player directly to a teammate was illegal, and the debate continues to this day over which player it hit. The catch, of course, was dubbed the “Immaculate Reception.”

Oakland finally broke through with a loaded team in 1976 that had Stabler at quarterback; Fred Biletnikoff and Cliff Branch at receiver; tight end Dave Casper; Hall of Fame offensive linemen Gene Upshaw and Art Shell; and a defense that included Willie Brown, Ted Hendricks, Tatum, John Matuszak, Otis Sistrunk and George Atkinson.

The Raiders went 13-1, losing only a blowout at New England in Week 4. They paid the Patriots back with a 24-21 win in their first playoff game and got over the AFC title game hump with a 24-7 win over the hated Steelers, who were crippled by injuries.

Oakland won it all with a 32-14 Super Bowl romp against Minnesota.

“Players loved playing for him,” Shell said. “He made it fun for us in camp and fun for us in the regular season. All he asked is that we be on time and play like hell when it was time to play.”

Madden battled an ulcer the following season, when the Raiders once again lost in the AFC title game. He retired from coaching at age 42 after a 9-7 season in 1978.

Madden was a longtime resident of Pleasanton, California, a Bay Area suburb. A 90-minute documentary on his coaching and broadcasting career, “All Madden,” debuted on Fox on Christmas Day. The film featured extensive interviews that Madden sat for this year. His wife, Virginia, and sons Joseph and Michael were also interviewed for the documentary.

John and Virginia Madden’s 62nd wedding anniversary was two days before his death.

Ravens without top 2 QBs after Huntley lands on COVID list

The Baltimore Ravens put quarterback Tyler Huntley on the reserve/COVID-19 list Saturday, leaving them without their top two QBs for Sunday’s showdown at Cincinnati for first place in the AFC North.

Lamar Jackson missed last week’s game with a sprained ankle, and the

Ravens announced this weekend that he would not travel with the team. Huntley played well in Jackson’s place in last weekend’s loss to Green Bay, but now Josh Johnson is the team’s top healthy quarterback.

The Ravens signed the 35-year-old journeyman Johnson before last week’s

game. He appeared in three games earlier this season for the New York Jets.

It’s been one major blow after another for the Ravens ever since running backs J.K. Dobbins and Gus Edwards went down with season-ending knee injuries before the season even began. Baltimore has more than a dozen players

on injured reserve and several more on the COVID-19 list.

The Ravens (8-6) have managed to hold at least a share of first place for almost the whole season, but they would fall out with a loss to the Bengals (8-6). Baltimore activated quarterback Kenji Bahar from the practice squad. (AP)

James, Westbrook have triple-doubles, Lakers' skid ends at 5



HOUSTON

(AP)—LeBron

James and Russell Westbrook both had triple-doubles and the Los Angeles Lakers snapped a season-high, five-game skid with a 132-123 victory over the Houston Rockets on Tuesday night.

"The hardest thing to do in this league is win," James said. "So when you win you never take it for granted."

James had 32 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists for his third triple-double this season, and it was his fifth consecutive 30-point game. Westbrook scored 24 points with 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his seventh of the season.

Houston stuck around for most of the night, but James took over late to allow the Lakers to pull away and hand the Rockets their fifth consecutive loss.

"For us to battle through this together and to finish the way we did with LeBron and Russ doing it together, bringing it home, I think that's a big step forward in this," said assistant coach David Fizdale, who was filling in for a fifth straight game for coach Frank Vogel because of COVID-19 protocols.

The Rockets trailed by one when James was called for goaltending on a layup by Jalen Green that would have put Houston on top with 2 ½ minutes left. But the Lakers challenged the call, and it was overturned. Carmelo Anthony made a 3-pointer a few seconds later to extend the lead to 120-116.

James added two free throws after that and his one-handed dunk after a turnover by Houston made it 124-116 with less than 90 seconds to go.

Kevin Porter Jr.'s 3-pointer got Houston within five before James struck again, making a layup to extend the lead to 126-119 with less than a minute remaining. James made four free throws after that to secure the victory.

"I just feel like I'm in a really good offensive zone right now," he said.

Green, the second overall pick in this year's draft, led the Rockets with 24 points after missing 15 of the last 16 games with a strained left hamstring.

"We expected to win," Houston coach Stephen Silas said. "We had no problems standing up to those guys, not backing down. They had some great players out there that played very well. Russ with the triple-double, LeBron with the triple-double and Melo doing his thing. It was tough."

Anthony had 24 points off the bench on a night James started at center and big men Dwight Howard and DeAndre Jordan didn't play.



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James talks to teammates during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Houston Rockets, Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021, in Houston.

James said it was the first time he'd started at center at any level of basketball.

"I never played center in my life before," he said. "I've always been on the wing or handling the ball."

Fizdale raved about the versatility James showed in his role Tuesday night.

"This guy is unbelievable," he said. "We're all very lucky as basketball people to get to watch what we're watching with this man."

The Lakers took the lead by scoring the last five points of the third quarter and opened the fourth with a 6-0 run to make it 103-92 with 11 minutes to go.

Green got Houston going after that, making two 3-pointers during a 10-2 spurt that cut the deficit to 105-102.

Porter had 22 points and nine assists in his return after missing the last 12 games with a bruised thigh. Christian Wood also scored 22.

Josh Christopher tied it on a layup with less than a minute left in the third quarter. But the Lakers scored the last five points of the quarter, capped by a 3 from Westbrook, to take a 97-92 lead into the fourth quarter. Westbrook pointed at the L.A. bench and smiled broadly as he walked off the court after the shot.

Fizdale said that Vogel was getting close to returning but he wasn't sure exactly when he could rejoin the team. Trevor Ariza, Kent Bazemore, Austin Reaves and Rajon Rondo missed the game because of health and safety protocols. Wayne Ellington missed the game for an illness that the team said was not COVID-19 related.

D.J. Augustin, Kenyon Martin Jr., Garrison Mathews and Jae'Sean Tate were out because of health and safety protocols.

Bucks 127, Magic 110

In Orlando, Fla., Giannis Antetokounmpo had 28 points, Bobby Portis scored 17 of his 19 points in the first half and Milwaukee defeated Orlando.

Milwaukee has won four in a row and five of its last seven. Since starting the season 6-8, the Bucks have gone 17-5 to surge back near the top of the Eastern Conference standings.

Khris Middleton scored 21 points for the Bucks, while Jrue Holiday chipped in 18 points and 10 assists. Antetokounmpo capped his 24th 20-point night in the fourth quarter by chucking Orlando's Freddie Gillespie to the floor with a forearm before dunking with his left hand.

Orlando rookie forward Franz Wagner scored 27 of his career-best 38 points in the second half. He made 12 of 20 shots and 4 of 8 3s.

76ers 114, Raptors 109

In Toronto, Tobias Harris had 19 points, 12 rebounds, and 10 assists for his first career triple-double. Joel Embiid finished with 36 points and 11 rebounds, and Philadelphia hung on to beat Toronto.

Georges Niang scored 19 points, Seth Curry had 12 and Furkan Korkmaz 10 as the 76ers won their second straight.

Chris Boucher scored a season-high 28 points and matched his career high with 19 rebounds, but the depleted Raptors lost their second straight.

Knicks 96, Timberwolves 88

In Minneapolis, Mitchell Robinson had 14 points and a season-high 18 rebounds, Julius Randle added 13 points and 15 boards, and New York topped short-handed Minnesota.

Evan Fournier scored 13 points, while Quentin Grimes added 11 off the bench for the Knicks in their second straight win.

Malik Beasley had 20 points and Jaden McDaniels added a season-high 18 for Minnesota, which has lost three of four.

With stars Karl-Anthony Towns, Anthony Edwards and D'Angelo Russell all out due to COVID-19 protocols, Minnesota was able to knock off Boston on Monday. With all three still unavailable one day later, the Wolves couldn't repeat that performance against the Knicks, thanks in large part to poor shooting.

Heat 119, Wizards 112

In Miami, Tyler Herro scored 32 points off the Miami bench, Jimmy Butler finished with 25 points and a career-best 15 assists, and the depleted Heat held off depleted Washington.

Duncan Robinson added 26 points for Miami, making eight 3-pointers on a night the Heat got by with an eight-man rotation that might be facing a new challenge after Butler twisted his right ankle with 1:03 remaining.

Kyle Lowry is in the health and safety protocols, Bam Adebayo is out with a thumb injury and now the Heat will start a two-week road trip Wednesday in San Antonio with Butler either missing or quite possibly ailing.

Spencer Dinwiddie scored

24 points and Kyle Kuzma had 22 for Washington. Davis Bertans scored 19, Daniel Gafford finished with 16 and Corey Kispert added 14 for the Wizards.

Pelicans 108, Cavaliers 104

In New Orleans, Garrett Temple nailed four of his five fourth-quarter 3-pointers in a decisive flurry and rookie Herb Jones scored a career-high 26 points to lift the New Orleans Pelicans to a near-record 108-104 comeback victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Tuesday night.

The resurgent Cavaliers lost guard Ricky Rubio to a late knee injury after he nearly finished with a triple-double.

The Cavaliers led by as many as 23 points in the first quarter, but the Pelicans chipped away with aggressive defense to record the second-biggest comeback in franchise history. The largest was from 24 points down to the Boston Celtics last Feb. 21.

Rubio, starting with Darius Garland sidelined due to health and safety protocols, had 27 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists before injuring his left knee on a non-contact stop in the lane with 2:20 left. Rubio had to be carried off the court by teammates.

Coach J.B. Bickerstaff said the extent of Rubio's injury had not yet been determined.

Nuggets 89, Warriors 86

In Francisco, Stephen Curry became the first player in NBA history to make 3,000 career 3-pointers on Tuesday night in a game where the Denver Nuggets barely held

off the NBA-leading Golden State Warriors 89-86.

Denver's Nikola Jokic blocked a potential game-tying shot by Jonathan Kuminga in the final seconds to preserve the win after his team nearly blew a 24-point halftime lead. The Warriors got one more chance to tie the game, but Andre Iguodala missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Jokic had 22 points, 18 rebounds, five assists and four steals to lead the Nuggets, while Will Barton added 21 points.

Andrew Wiggins had 21 points and eight rebounds for Golden State in his first game back from the league's COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Curry, who scored 21 of his 23 points in the second half, made a corner 3-pointer late in the third quarter to give him 157 consecutive games with a 3-point field goal. It ties his own NBA record, which he set from 2014-16.

The Warriors trailed 60-36 at the half, but kept Denver down offensively while opening the third quarter on a 17-5 run to cut Denver's lead to 65-53. They pulled within five on a Curry step-back 3-pointer with 7:20 remaining in the fourth quarter before he made back-to-back 3-pointers to cut the Nuggets' lead to 84-82 with 2:08 left.

Kings 117, Thunder 111

In Sacramento, Calif., Tyrese Haliburton had 24 points and 10 assists, and the Sacramento Kings held off the Oklahoma City Thunder 117-111 on Tuesday night.

Buddy Hield added 21 points off the bench for the Kings. Harrison Barnes scored 17 and De'Aaron Fox had 12 points and eight assists.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 33 points for the Thunder.

Earlier in the day, Oklahoma City coach Mark Daigneault, rookie Josh Giddey and forward Derrick Favors entered the NBA's health and safety protocols. Assistant coach Mike Wilks ran the team in Daigneault's absence.

The Kings withstood a scoring flurry by the Thunder in the third quarter, built a 17-point lead early in the fourth and made three free throws over the final 32 seconds to end a three-game losing streak.

Haliburton had 10 points in the fourth, including a clutch 3-pointer after Oklahoma City pulled to 106-96. It's the fifth time in six games Haliburton has had at least 20 points and 10 assists.

Gilgeous-Alexander kept Oklahoma City close and scored 15 points in the final 12 minutes, but the short-handed Thunder had just two players reach double figures.

One of a kind: Ohtani wins AP Male Athlete of Year award

By GREG BEACHAM
AP SPORTS WRITER



ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP)—

Most of the time in professional sports, it's easy to think it's all been done before.

With so many finetuned athletes constantly pushing each other to the peak of human potential, we can experience unprecedented demonstrations of sporting brilliance every week of our lives. But it's truly rare to witness anything that isn't fundamentally just a better, more prolific version of something we've already seen.

That's why Shohei Ohtani's astonishing redefinition of modern baseball captured the world's attention so vividly in 2021—and that's why the Los Angeles Angels' two-way superstar is the winner of The Associated Press' Male Athlete of the Year award.

The unanimous American League MVP put together a season with no analogue in the past century of his sport. Almost no one had been an everyday two-way player for many decades — and nobody has been both one of baseball's top power hitters and one of its best starting pitchers since Babe Ruth starred at the plate and on the mound for the Boston Red Sox in 1919.

"He's doing something we

haven't seen in our lifetimes, but he's also doing it at the very highest level of hitting and pitching," Angels manager Joe Maddon said late in the regular season. "He's doing more than other players, but he's also doing it better than almost everybody else on that field, and those are the greatest players in the game, his contemporaries. He's playing their game, but he's also playing a different game."

Ohtani hit 46 homers and drove in 100 runs with a .965 OPS while playing in 126 games as the AL's best designated hitter, as evidenced by his Silver Slugger award. He finished third in the majors in homers after leading the sport for much of the season.

Ohtani also started 23 games on the mound, going 9-2 with a 3.18 ERA and 156 strikeouts over 130 1/3 innings as the Angels' ace and one of the AL's top right-handers. He has a 100-mph fastball, but his splitter might be the best pitch in baseball, with movement that resembles a ball rolling off the edge of a table.

The 6-foot-4 star also was among the fastest baserunners in the majors while stealing 26 bases and scoring 103 runs. He even led the league with eight triples—and he also played a little outfield when asked.

Any one of these achievements would be impressive



Los Angeles Angels' Shohei Ohtani is greeted in the dugout after he hit a solo home run during the first inning of a baseball game against the Seattle Mariners, Sunday, Oct. 3, 2021, in Seattle. **AP**

for a 27-year-old hitting his prime in his fourth season since moving from Japan to the major leagues.

Doing it all at the same

time is something that almost nobody who's currently alive had ever seen.

Ohtani kept baseball's historians and statheads metaphori-

cally buried up to their eyes in dusty record books all summer as they dug into the early 20th century annals to identify the last players to accomplish the statistical superlatives Ohtani was currently blazing past.

Mike Trout, Ohtani's three-time AL MVP teammate, called Ohtani's season "nothing short of electric."

"At times, I felt like I was back in Little League," Trout added. "To watch a player throw eight innings, hit a home run, steal a base and then go play right field was incredible."

Fans across the world agreed: Despite his soft-spoken personality and single-minded focus on his sport, Ohtani has become an icon wherever baseball is played and a known

figure even beyond the game's traditional borders.

"I've never seen fans get to ballparks so early and stay to the end," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said in July. "That's what he's bringing to the equation. I love it. Seems like every pitch when he's at the plate, you can hear the oohs and aahs. I think it's great for baseball."

Ohtani's success not only commanded fans' attention on both sides of the Pacific, but also reignited a debate long considered finished about the merits of sports specialization in a country where young athletes are often encouraged to stop competing in multiple disciplines even before they reach their teens.



From left, CNMI National Swimming Team members Juhn Tenorio, Shoko Litulumar, Asaka Litulumar, and Jinnosuke Suzuki take a photo inside the cavernous Etihad Arena in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, site of the 15th FINA World Swimming Championships in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Brooklyn	23	9	.719	—
Philadelphia	18	16	.529	6
Boston	16	18	.471	8
New York	16	18	.471	8
Toronto	14	17	.452	8½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	22	13	.629	—
Charlotte	18	17	.514	4
Washington	17	17	.500	4½
Atlanta	15	18	.455	6
Orlando	7	28	.200	15

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	21	10	.677	—
Milwaukee	23	13	.639	½
Cleveland	20	14	.588	2½
Indiana	14	20	.412	8½
Detroit	5	27	.156	16½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	21	14	.600	—
Dallas	16	17	.485	4
San Antonio	14	19	.424	6
New Orleans	13	22	.371	8
Houston	10	25	.286	11

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	24	9	.727	—
Denver	17	16	.515	7
Minnesota	16	18	.471	8½
Portland	13	20	.394	11
Oklahoma City	12	21	.364	12

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	27	7	.794	—
Phoenix	26	7	.788	½
L.A. Clippers	17	17	.500	10
L.A. Lakers	17	18	.486	10½
Sacramento	14	21	.400	13½

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

APELO

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national School, was the lone competitor in the girls U18 and completed the 1,500m run in 6:15.2.

Results of the Dec. 20 local Oceania Virtual Championships will be published in next week's issue of *Saipan Tribune*.

Last October, Oceania Athletics announced it will be conducting its regional championships online through the 2021 Oceania Athletics Virtual Championships.

"With the world, and especially the Pacific feeling the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic, it has meant

that it is now, over two years, since we have been able to gather as an Oceania Athletics family in person," said Oceania Athletics.

It said the 2021 Oceania Athletics Virtual Championships would allow athletes of all ages and abilities to compete, albeit virtually, for medals and to be crowned Oceania Virtual Champion.

The 2021 Oceania Athletics Virtual Championships is being held in partnership with Oceania Masters Athletics Association and will see champions crowned and medals awarded across multiple age groups, from under 14 to 80 years of age.

SWIMMERS

From Page 20

perience was great.

"I've worked hard and got all personal best times, so I'm really happy. Believing in yourself and working hard for what you want to achieve is how I got to where I am. If you believe, you will succeed," said the 16-year-old student from MHS.

She added that all of them exceeded their goals in Abu Dhabi.

"I believe that everyone did really great! My team-

mates shocked me with their times, and I'm really happy for them."

The elder Litulumar vowed to even be better the next time she dives into the pool for competition.

"My next target is to cut 1 minute for my 100m freestyle. I believe that I can do better, and for that I will train harder than ever."

Her younger sister, Shoko, summed up her whole experience at the FINA World Swimming Championships as "splendid" and that she will be forever motivated by all the

record-breaking swims.

"I saw very fast athletes, learned some things from them by watching, saw people breaking records, and that got me inspired to give it my all in swimming, that if I train as hard, I may one day be the one standing on that podium."

The 14-year-old student from MHS said she will definitely share the techniques she learned while training for the meet with her teammates.

"I would let my other teammates learn the techniques I learned by explaining all the things I know. I am very happy

for all of us who competed in the world championships because we all got good times," she said.

Shoko said her next goal is to shatter the CNMI women's 50m backstroke record. "I will also my best to cut 39 seconds in the 50m breaststroke."

Aside from the national swimmers, also part of the CNMI delegation in Abu Dhabi were CNMI national coach Hiroyuki Kimura and Northern Mariana Islands Swimming Federation representatives Richard Sikkell and Hiroko Tenorio.

TASA

From Page 20

face every time we have the opportunity to try out for the national team. My thoughts are they should give two automatic slots for Tinian and Rota in the national team," he told *Saipan Tribune*.

Kiyoshi's suggestion came after CNMI national baseball team manager Manny Sablan and coaches Deron Flores and Gary Cruz made their first cut last Dec. 15.

Of the 56 original players trying out to represent the is-

lands in the quadrennial meet next year, only 36 remain.

Tinian players Dustin Sablan, Peter Cepeda, Bradley Lizama, and Bing Sablan and Rota players Luis Hocog and Daniel Rangamar didn't make it in the first cut.

Kiyoshi said the biggest issue for Tinian players was attendance, as the two Sablans, Cepeda, and Lizama weren't able to come back to the try-outs after flights from Tinian to Saipan were suspended following Thanksgiving.

"They got cut I believe because of attendance. Star Mar-

ianas Air suspending flights was a huge factor," he said.

The TASA head said in his humble opinion it was never a question of talent when it comes to the players from Tinian.

"Seeing this guys play they are all quality players in my opinion, but the coaches and manager didn't put into account."

Kiyoshi also wants TASA and its counterpart on Rota to become members of the Northern Marianas Sports Association board.

"I have brought this atten-

tion up to my local leadership but until now no feedback yet. It's frustrating when we try to do something right for the betterment of our community. But that would not stop me from pushing my opinions or thoughts about the disadvantages we face as a sports organization from Tinian and Rota."

A former U.S. Marine, Kiyoshi returned to Tinian in 1995 and since then has become an active volunteer in youth sports as well as in the island's Boys Scout and Cub Scout programs.



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Saipan Tribune Sports

John Madden, Hall of Fame coach and broadcaster, dies at 85

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Swimmers vow to get even better

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The CNMI National Swimming Team that recently came back from the 15th FINA World Swimming Championships all promised to further improve as well as share their experience from the short course meet held from Dec. 16 to 21 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.



From left, CNMI National Swimming Team members Jinnosuke Suzuki, Juhn Tenorio, Asaka Litulumar, and Shoko Litulumar and national swimming coach Hiroyuki Kimura pose for a group photo shortly after arriving at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport following their stint in the 15th FINA World Swimming Championships in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Juhn Tenorio was very proud that he was able to represent CNMI swimming in the biggest stage of the world.

"I'm happy I was able to bring back the results I wanted. I think we all did well considering the pressure and everything.

I think the Litulumar sisters did very well and performed the best in their abilities. For Jinnosuke [Suzuki] I was not

worried for him because I know him well and he's not the type of guy to breakdown under pressure," he said.

As far as imparting the knowledge he learned from competing in such a high-level meet to other swimmers, the

17-year-old Marianas High School student said "I will show it by my actions during practice and outside of practice."

Tenorio said his next target will be the 2022 FINA World Aquatics Championships that will be held in Fukuoka, Japan next May.

"We will start including different types of training in our sessions and hopefully we can bring back as good or better results than this time."

Jinnosuke Suzuki said overall he had a very fun experience at the FINA World Swimming Championships.

"I was able to learn many new things during my time in Abu Dhabi. I will also try to teach the others what I learned and try to motivate them during practice," he said.

Like Tenorio, the 16-year-old student from MHS said he thinks all four of them gave a good account of themselves during their stint in the world championships.

"I believe that the others that competed did a great job and are happy with the results. My next goal is to become better at my starts and get faster at the 200m freestyle."

Asaka Litulumar said she had an amazing time with her teammates and her overall experience. **See SWIMMERS on Page 19**

Apelo swiftest in 100m dash

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Leo Apelo surprised everyone by registering the fastest time in the men's 100m event of the first phase of the local Oceania Virtual Championships held last Nov. 29 at the Oleai track and field.

The 34-year-old officer of the Transportation Security Administration completed the race with a time of 12.18. He was followed by the 12.40 of Beouch Ngirchongor with Angel San Nicolas completing the Top 3 in 13.31.

Josh Joson topped the boys 18U 100m after crossing the finish line in 12.98. Michael Rodgers was the other youth runner who took part in the event and came in at 13.19.

Apelo said winning the men's 100m of the Nov. 29 event came as a total surprise.

"Felt great but I didn't expect to do well. I'm actually trying out for the CNMI National Weightlifting Team. I just did a little training on my

own to supplement my main sport. So mostly weightlifting and a little sprinting here and there," he said.

Apelo added that it was the first time he took part in a virtual race and that the Nov. 29 meet was actually his first race in 2021.

"Honestly, that was the only race I've ran this year I haven't done any virtual races so far. I dedicate the win to my awesome wife, Jillian, for being so patient with me. Oh yeah I forgot to mention Ed (Edward Dela Cruz Jr.) actually inspired me run," he said.

In other results from the Nov. 29 meet, Sildrey Voloria and Simon Necesito were the only competitors in the 1,500m. Voloria, a 19-year-old Northern Marianas College student, tackled the men's long course in 5:32.5. Necesito, a teacher from Dandan Middle School, finished in 9:22.3.

Tiana Cabrera, a 16-year-old student from Saipan Inter- **See APELO on Page 19**



Leo Apelo, seen here in a file photo, topped the men's 100m event of the Oceania Virtual Championships held last Nov. 29 at the Oleai track and field.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



From left, Tinian baseball players Esteban K. Sablan, Dustin K. Sablan, Bradley P. Lizama, and Peter C. Cepeda were among the 20 players cut from the CNMI National Baseball Team try-outs last Dec. 15.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

TASA wants 'automatic slots' for Tinian, Rota baseball players

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The Tinian Amateur Sports Association wants Tinian and Rota to be each granted an automatic slot in the CNMI National Baseball Team for next year's Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games.

TASA president Jose Kiyoshi said for the sake of development the Saipan Baseball League should consider including a player each from its two sister islands in the national team.

"This is one of the disadvantages Tinian and Rota **See TASA on Page 19**